THE
M♦A♠G♥I♣C
BOOK

NOEL DANIEL (ED.)

TASCHEN

Art of Enchantment

The world's greatest magicians from the Middle Ages through the 1950s

Magic has enchanted humankind for millennia, evoking terror, laughter, shock, and amazement. Once persecuted as heretics and sorcerers, magicians have always been conduits to a parallel universe of limitless possibility—whether invoking spirits, reading minds, or inverting the laws of nature by sleight of hand. Long before science fiction, virtual realities, video games, and the Internet, the craft of magic was the most powerful fantasy world man had ever known. As the pioneers of special effects throughout history, magicians have never ceased to mystify us by making the impossible possible.

This book celebrates more than 500 years of the stunning visual culture of the world's greatest magicians. Featuring more than 750 rarely seen vintage posters, photographs, handbills, and engravings as well as paintings by Hieronymus Bosch and Bruegel among others, *The Magic Book* traces the history of magic as a performing art from the 1400s to the 1950s. Combining sensational images with incisive text, the book explores the evolution of the magicians' craft, from medieval street performers to the brilliant stage magicians who gave rise to cinematic special effects; from the 19th century's golden age of magic to groundbreaking daredevils like Houdini and the early 20th century's vaudevillians.

FRONT COVER:
Stock poster with elements of black and modern magic, late 19th century.
Christian Fechner Collection, Paris

BACK COVER:
Grover George poster (detail), ca. 1930.
Christian Fechner Collection, Paris

TASCHEN

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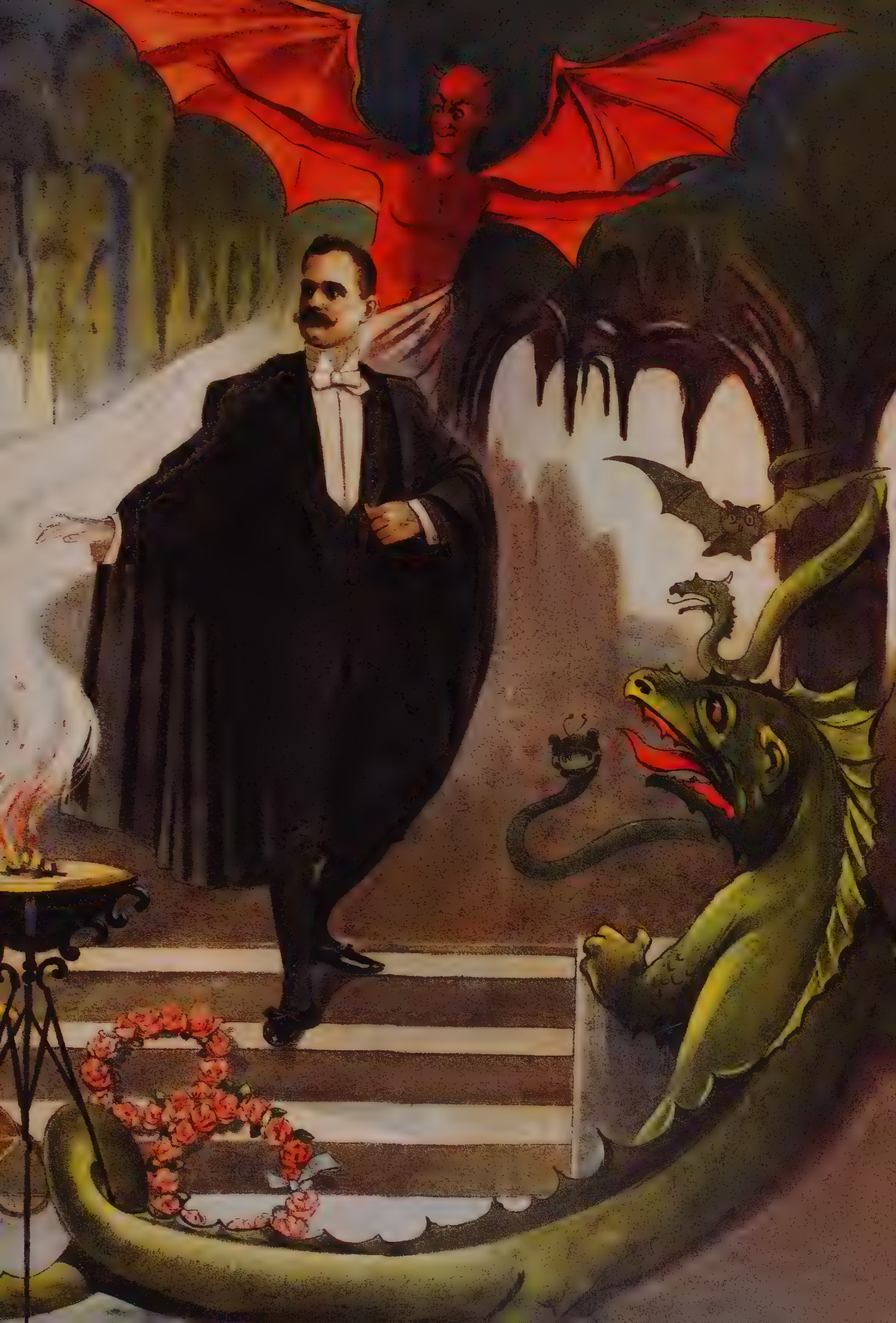
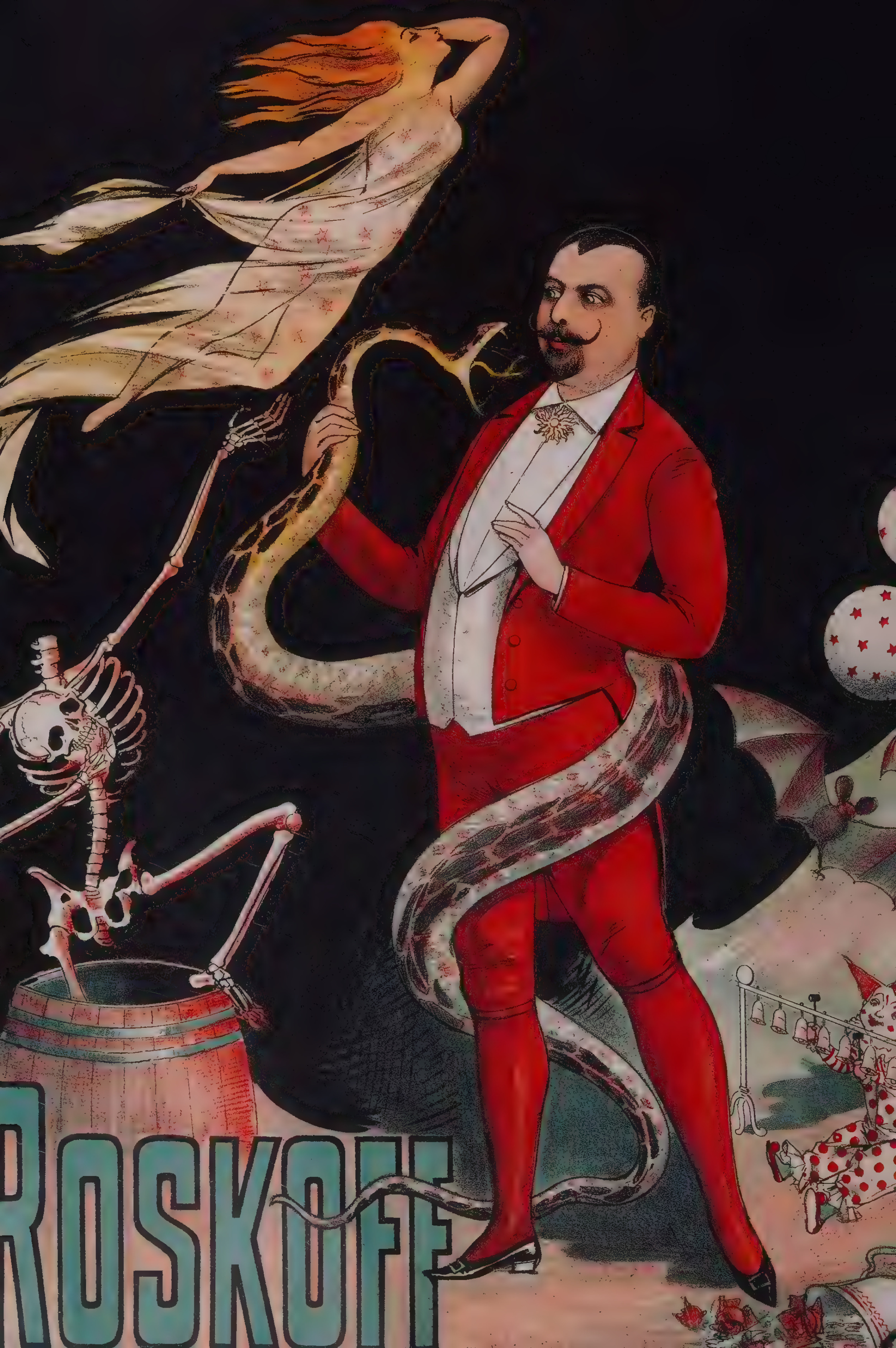
and JIM STEINMEYER




ROSKOFF

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FOREWORD

WIZARDS OF WONDER

500 Years of Magical Show Business

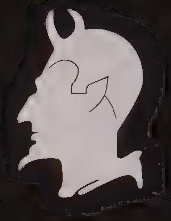
By wand or wit, a skilled magician can fling open the doors to a parallel universe of baffling possibility, piquing the far reaches of human imagination. Magicians upend our assumptions about the way the world works, making us literally not believe our eyes. This doubt is magic's power. But this doubt is also the audience's reward, a reminder of the pleasure of uncertainty and the virtue of suspended disbelief. Magic seems to tell us that the real danger is not in appearing to consort with the Devil or bend the laws of nature, but in thinking that we already know all there is to know.

The images in this book are metaphors for the mental gymnastics of illusion. As much as they document magic's expansive fantasy life, they also mirror a truth often repeated among magicians: magic is in the mind. For all of magic's playful associations with dark forces, it embodies a strikingly optimistic belief in the power of the human mind, delivered to us by those whose hard-won ability to deceive epitomizes self-reliance and invention.

For centuries, these true pioneers of special effects have made the impossible seem possible. This book brings together more than 500 years of this unique visual culture. With images ranging from late medieval manuscripts to behind-the-scenes snapshots and 20th-century billboard-sized posters, these pages cover the period from the 1400s through television's ascension in the 1950s. By re-creating magic's evolution as a performing art, the more than 750 images here offer an intimate glimpse into its vivid eras and personalities, from early street performers to inventive 19th-century stage magicians to the trailblazers of the golden age and vaudevillian daredevils like Houdini.

Although secrets are not revealed here, it's befitting for the history of magic to be pulled together in the magician's most beloved form: the book. Books have long played an important role in preserving magic-related knowledge, allowing magicians to defend themselves against accusations of sorcery, and enabling them to impart their secrets to subsequent generations in a continuous evolution of ideas. Acutely aware of the past, magicians go to great lengths to preserve it. Most of the images on these pages come from private collections, and many hang on the walls of living rooms and studies, passed down from collector to collector. They are part of a dynamic tradition that reveres and protects centuries of knowledge. This book combines dazzling puzzle pieces of magic's visual culture with original texts by leading magic historians to create a portal through which we can glimpse this living history.

Noel Daniel, Los Angeles



PAGES 1 AND 3: **ca. 1927** Magician C. Miller with the A. F. Crouse United Shows carnival.

PAGES 4–5: **late 19th century** Artwork from the children's question-and-answer game *La Bonne Aventure*.

PAGE 6: **1903** George Brindamour performing a levitation.

PAGE 7: **ca. 1896** Detail of a Frederick Bancroft poster.

PAGE 8: **ca. 1890s** Poster of the magician Roskoff.

PAGE 9: **1889** Legend Harry Kellar performs the aerial illusion Astarte with Dot Robinson.

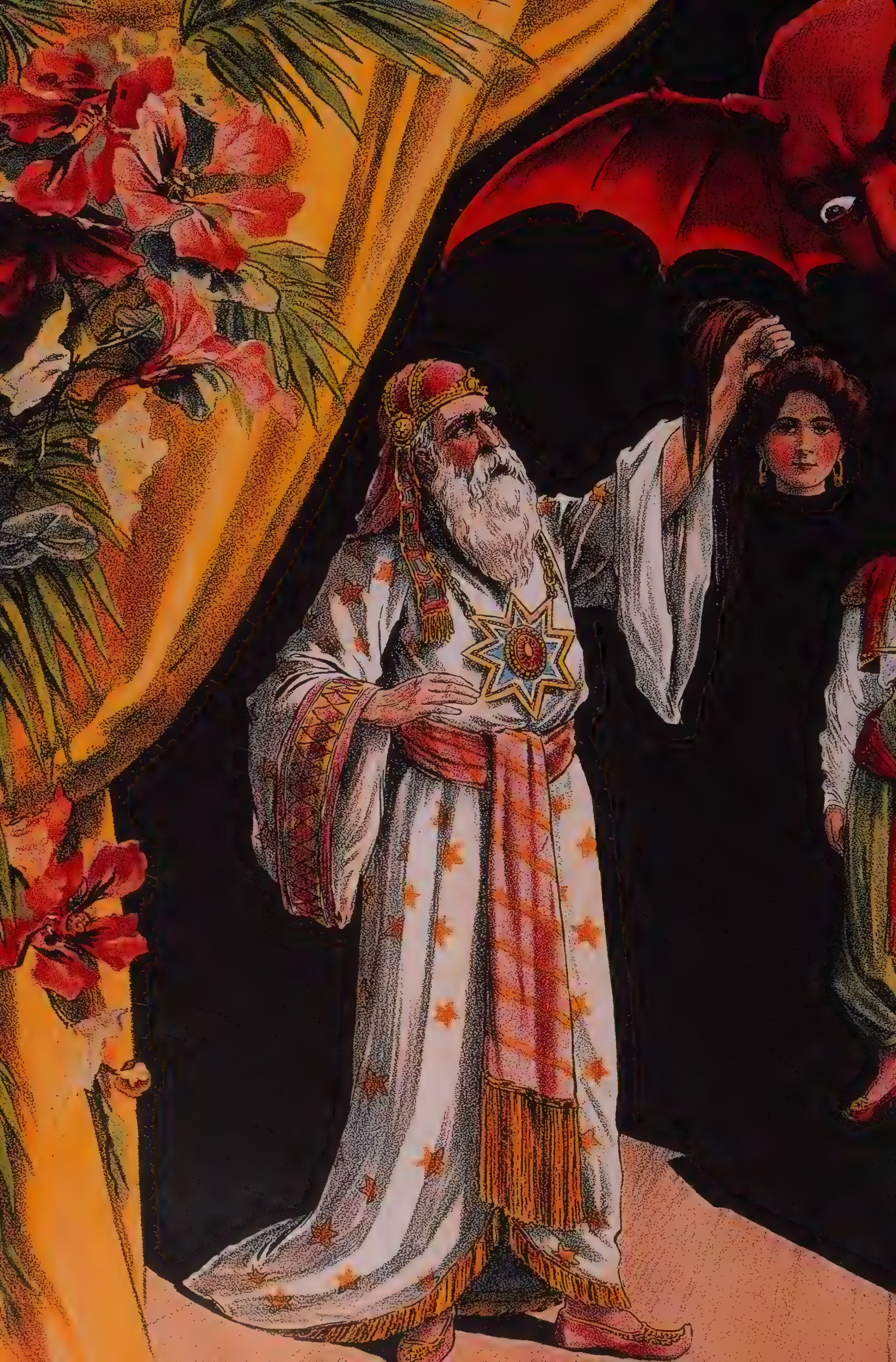
PAGE 12: **ca. 1928** Anonymous magician photographed by Ludwig Schorer.

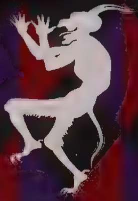
PAGE 14: **ca. 1889** Harmington (Charles Fauque) of the Theatre Robert-Houdin in Paris.

PAGE 15: **ca. 1893** Early photograph of Horace Goldin holding a bag of "secrets."

PAGE 17: **1911** Detail of a poster of Fredrik the Great (Alexander Fredrik).

PAGES 18–19: **1907** Detail of a poster of Dr. Ormonde's Great Sunflower Coterie.

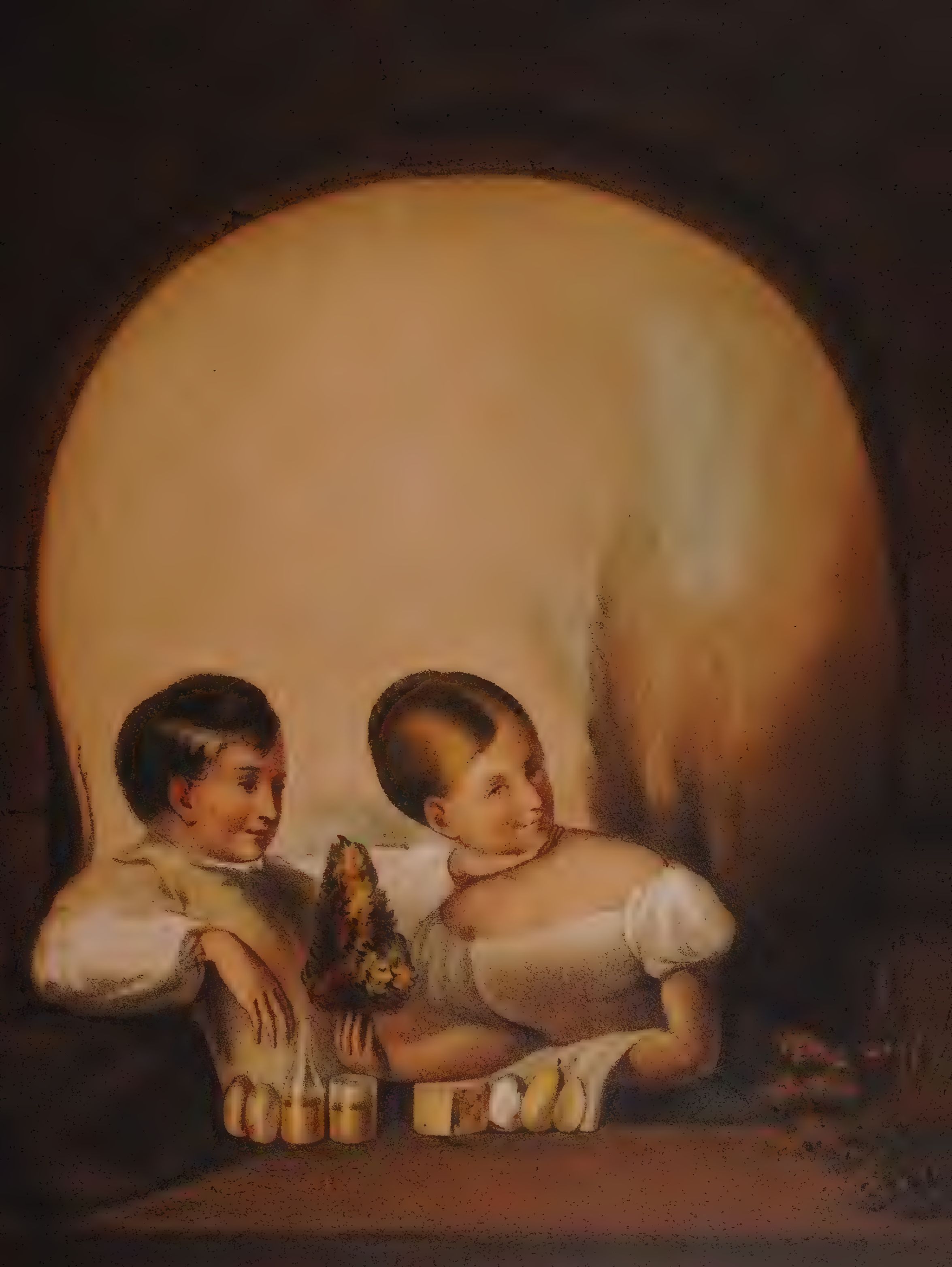




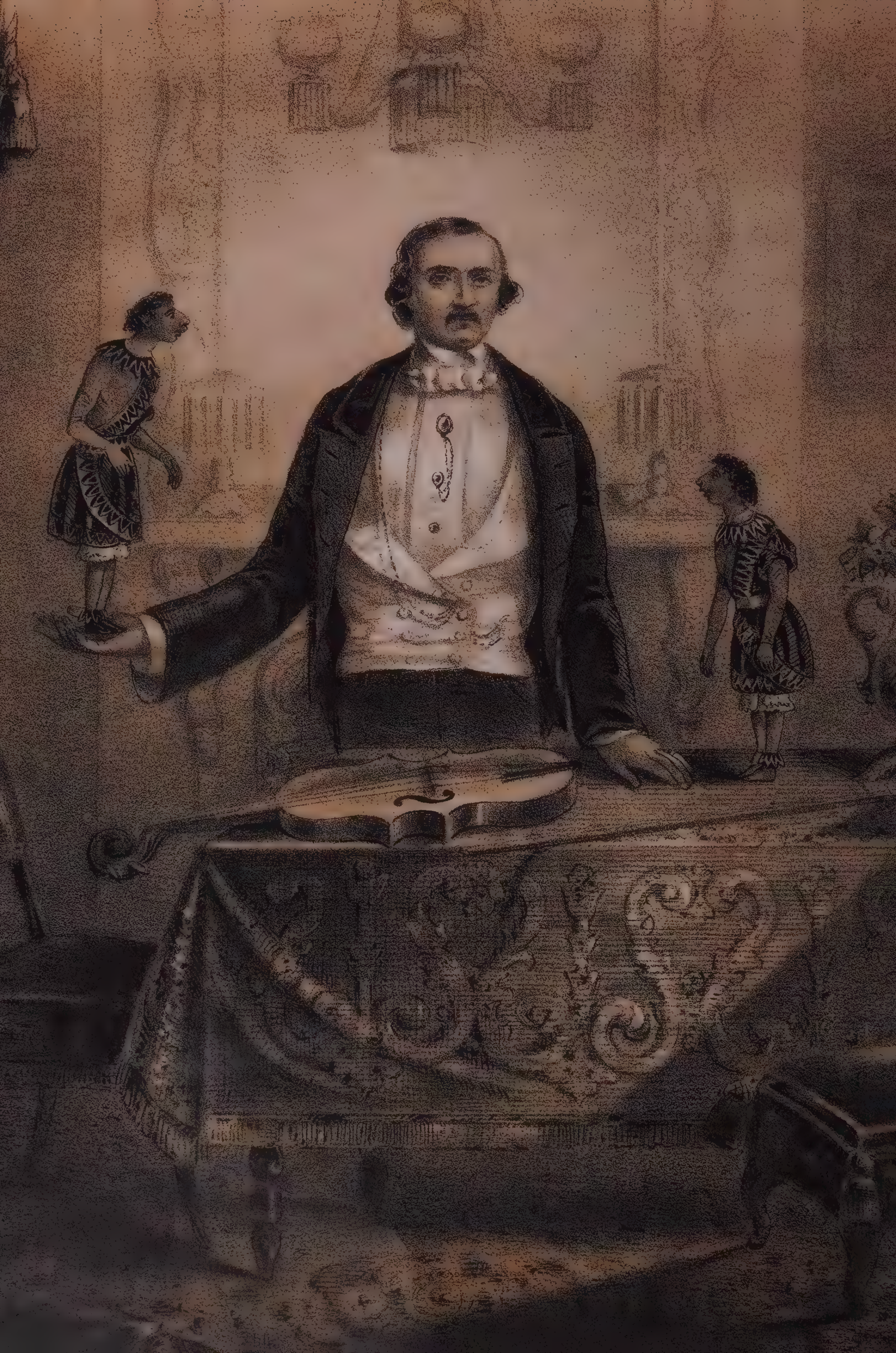
TO PLEASE AND CHEAT THE SIGHT

Ricky Jay

Illustrated with items from his collection



BLOSSOM AND DECAY



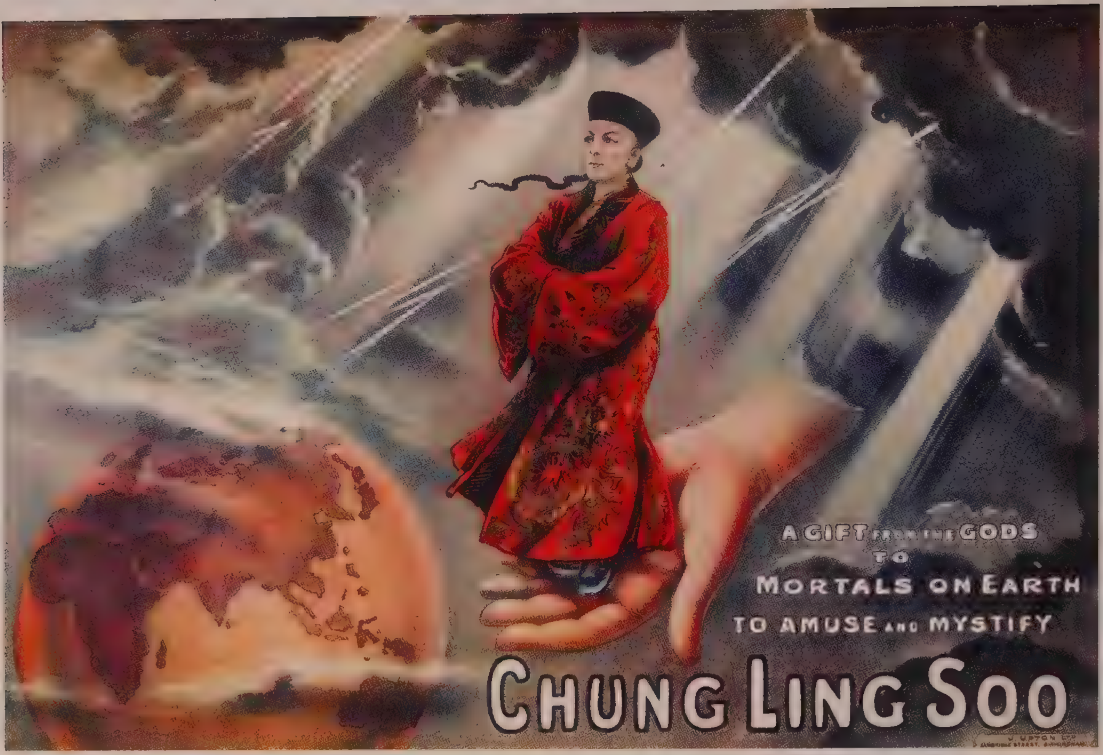
Ricky Jay

Introduction: TO PLEASE AND CHEAT THE SIGHT

Magic, unlike circus and theater, is not perceived as a collaborative art. Its stars are not troupes or casts or companies, but individuals. Extraordinary individuals who have mastered myriad esoteric skills. Are they not in league with dark forces? Do they not exhibit a hustler's control of the cards, a thief's understanding of locks, a physicist's command of the elements? Can they not throw their voices, resist the effects of poison, and defy gravity? Can they not alter your perceptions and read your innermost thoughts?

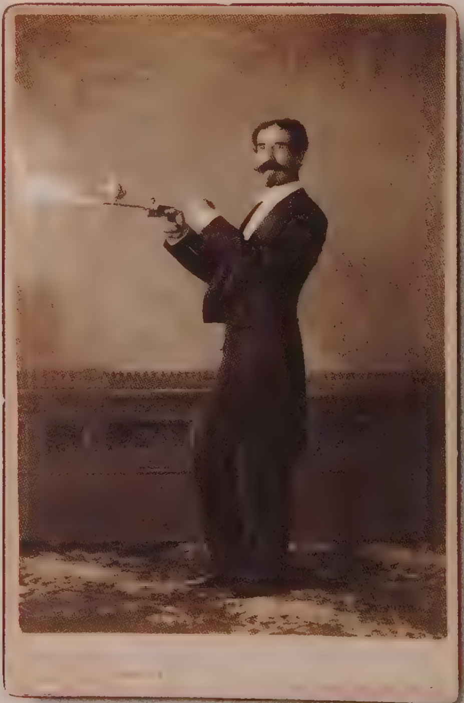
PAGE 21: 1860 The skull is a classic icon of mystery. This lithograph, called *Blossom and Decay*, is one of the earliest optical illusions utilizing the hidden-object technique. Depending on how viewers focus their eyes they are able to perceive either a skull or a young couple seated at a table: a splendid example of skullduggery.

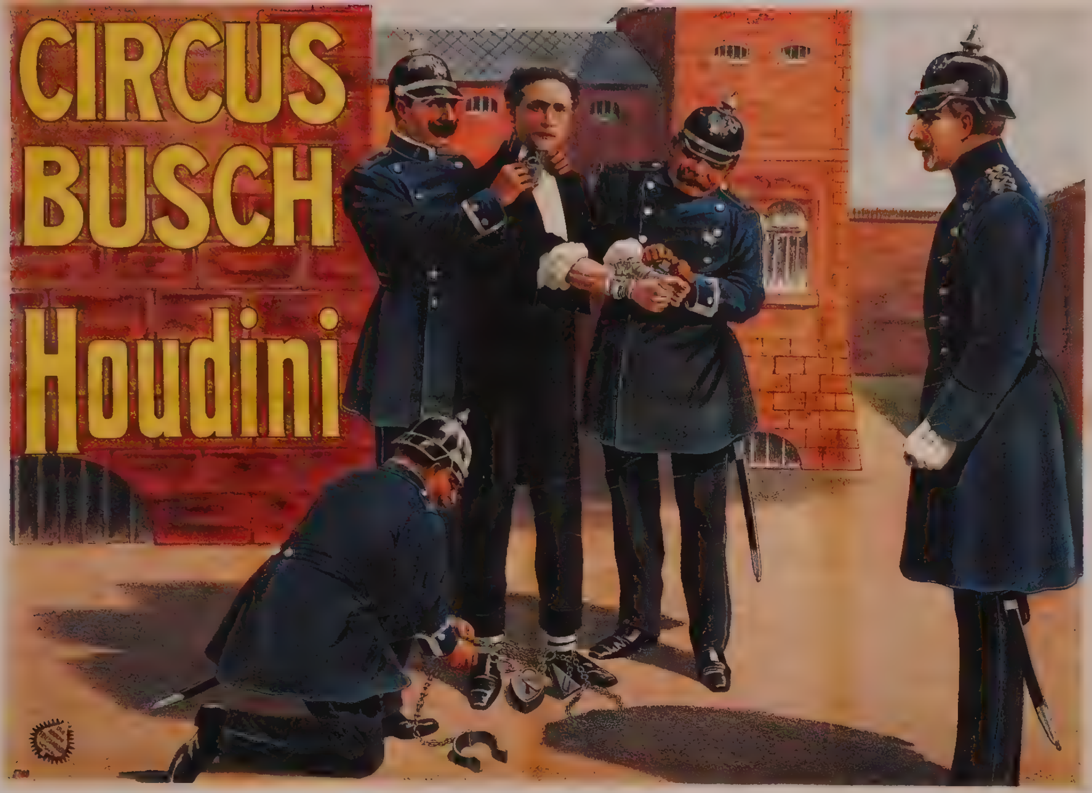
OPPOSITE: 1853 Magicians like the famous Scottish conjurer John Henry Anderson sometimes supplemented their incomes by presenting other novelties like the "Aztec Lilliputians." A number of deceptions are illustrated in this subtly tinted lithograph. The children Anderson holds were not Aztecs, and they were considerably larger than they appear in this portrait.


A GIFT FROM THE GODS
TO
MORTALS ON EARTH
TO AMUSE AND MYSTIFY
CHUNG LING SOO
J. UPTON LTD

ABOVE: **ca. 1912** William Ellsworth Robinson was the living embodiment of deception. An American, he pretended to be Chinese and performed as Chung Ling Soo. Not a humble advertiser, he graced scores of posters, but none was more powerful or cheekier than this appearance from the heavens.

RIGHT: **ca. 1890** Parisian-born Alexander Herrmann was the most famous conjurer in America when he posed for this unusual portrait. Tall and thin, sporting a mustache and goatee and decked out in evening dress, more than any other performer, Herrmann defined the look of the modern magician. His death in 1896 was noted in front-page obituaries all across the country.



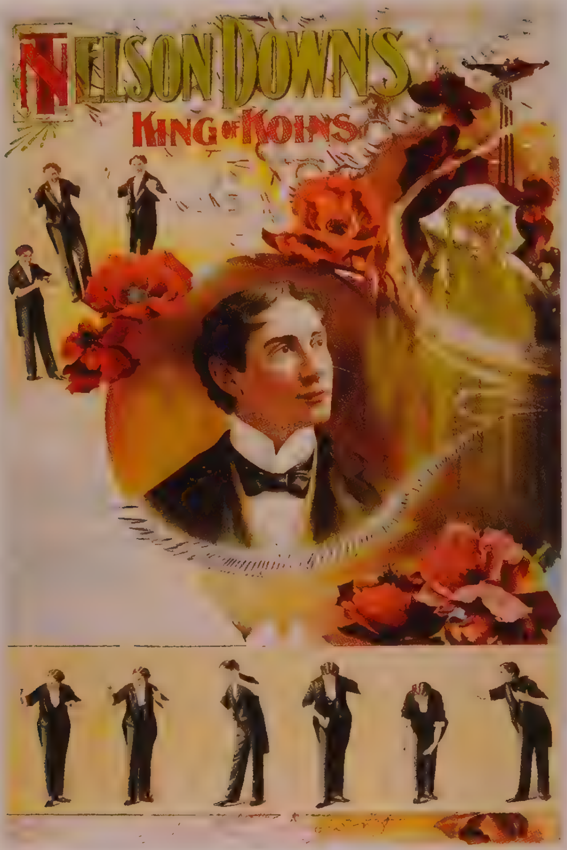


If magic necessitates "the theatrical representation of the defiance of natural law," how many individuals (almost always men) are capable of such lofty manipulation? How do we choose to represent them, and how do they choose to represent themselves? These individuals may be portrayed as genial, avuncular, suave, sophisticated, powerful, or mysterious: Kellar, "toasting the devil"; Houdini, "the man who walks through walls"; Chung Ling Soo, "a gift from the gods to mortals on Earth to amuse and mystify."

So formidable were these challenges that they gave rise to a culture of celebrity, in which a single performer would command the attention of the public: Fawkes, Pinetti, Robert-Houdin, Herrmann the Great, and, most famously, Houdini became the synecdoches of their art. But it was not always so. In 1903, for example, while Chung Ling Soo excited audiences on the London stage, another half dozen of the great magicians of the world—Okito at the Alhambra, Downs at the Empire and Thurston at the Tivoli, Valadon at Egyptian Hall, Lafayette at the Hippodrome, and Le Roy at the Oxford—competed in the same city.

This was not only the golden age of magic, but also the golden age of the poster. It was the heyday of exquisite stone lithography. The father of the poster, Jules Chéret, as well as other famous artists, commemorated magic performers. Limestone and lithographic crayon combined perfectly to capture the appearance of freshly sketched portraits of conjurers, with imps or owls perched on their shoulders. These advertising sheets often showed lovely ladies levitating on stage, but, surprisingly, in direct contrast to the imagery of the circus, these women were rarely displayed in scanty costumes. Performance magic, for much of its long history, eschewed sex in favor of mystery. Ironically, the power-wielding magician often presaged a tame and wholesome family entertainment. (Even today, many of the craft's best practitioners are misperceived as suitable for children's entertainment.)

ABOVE: **1912** Houdini was the greatest publicist and advertiser of his day. This Friedländer lithograph was struck for Houdini's 1912 appearance at Berlin's famous Circus Busch. A different version of the poster was used earlier, and a similar image was later to appear on a tin of chocolates.



LEFT: **ca. 1900** T. Nelson Downs became a headliner through specialization. Although skilled in other branches of sleight of hand, he featured the manipulation of currency and billed himself as the "King of Koins." This poster by Carqueville of Chicago is a splendid example of the lithographer's art.

PAGES 28–29: **1905** At the turn of the 20th century, Le Roy, Talma, and Bosco were among the world's most innovative and impressive conjurers. The same may be said of the Friedländer lithographers of Hamburg. Even though they rarely printed such large posters, this six-sheet maintained the highest standards of design and production.

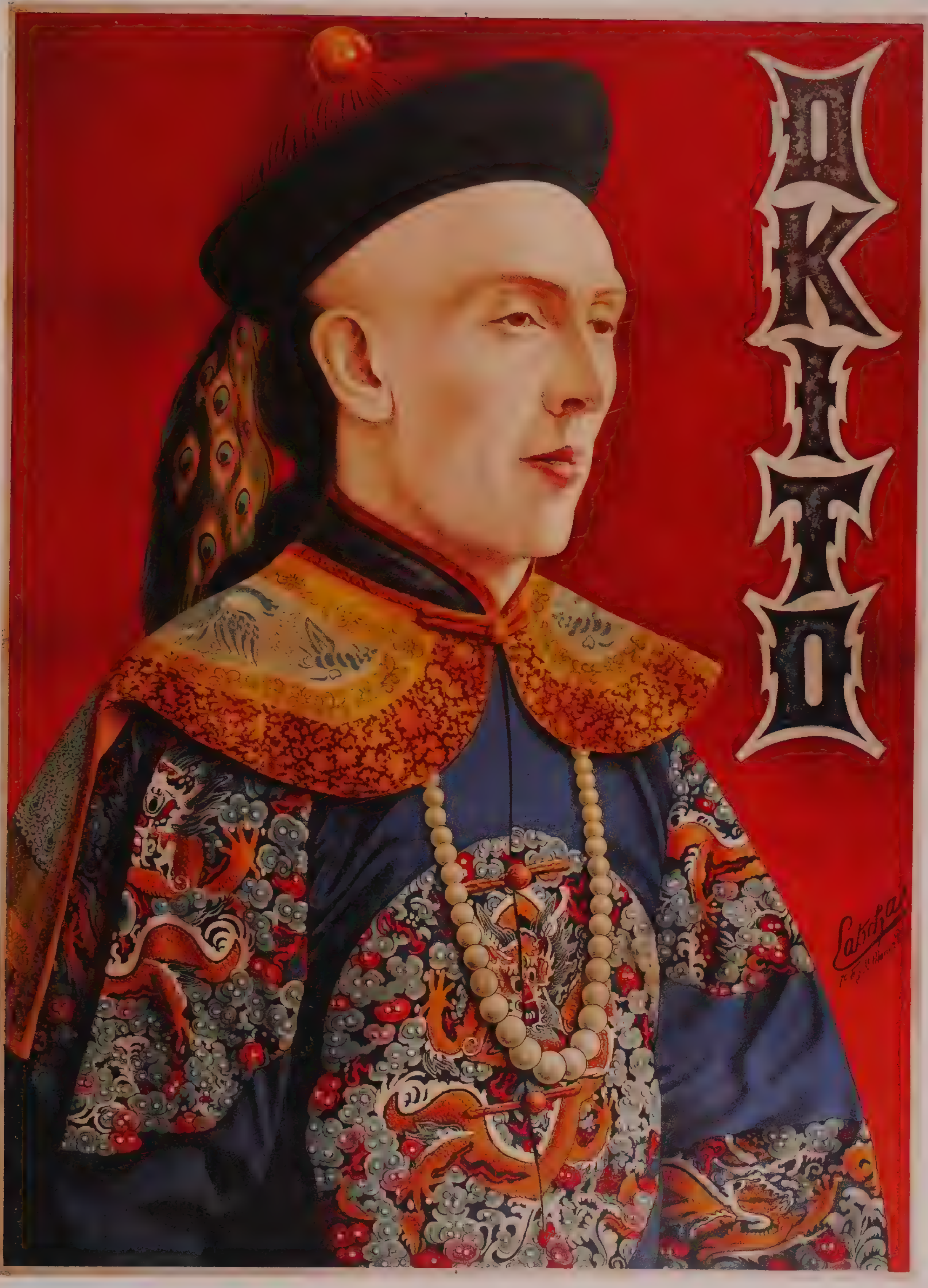
The Visual Art of Magic

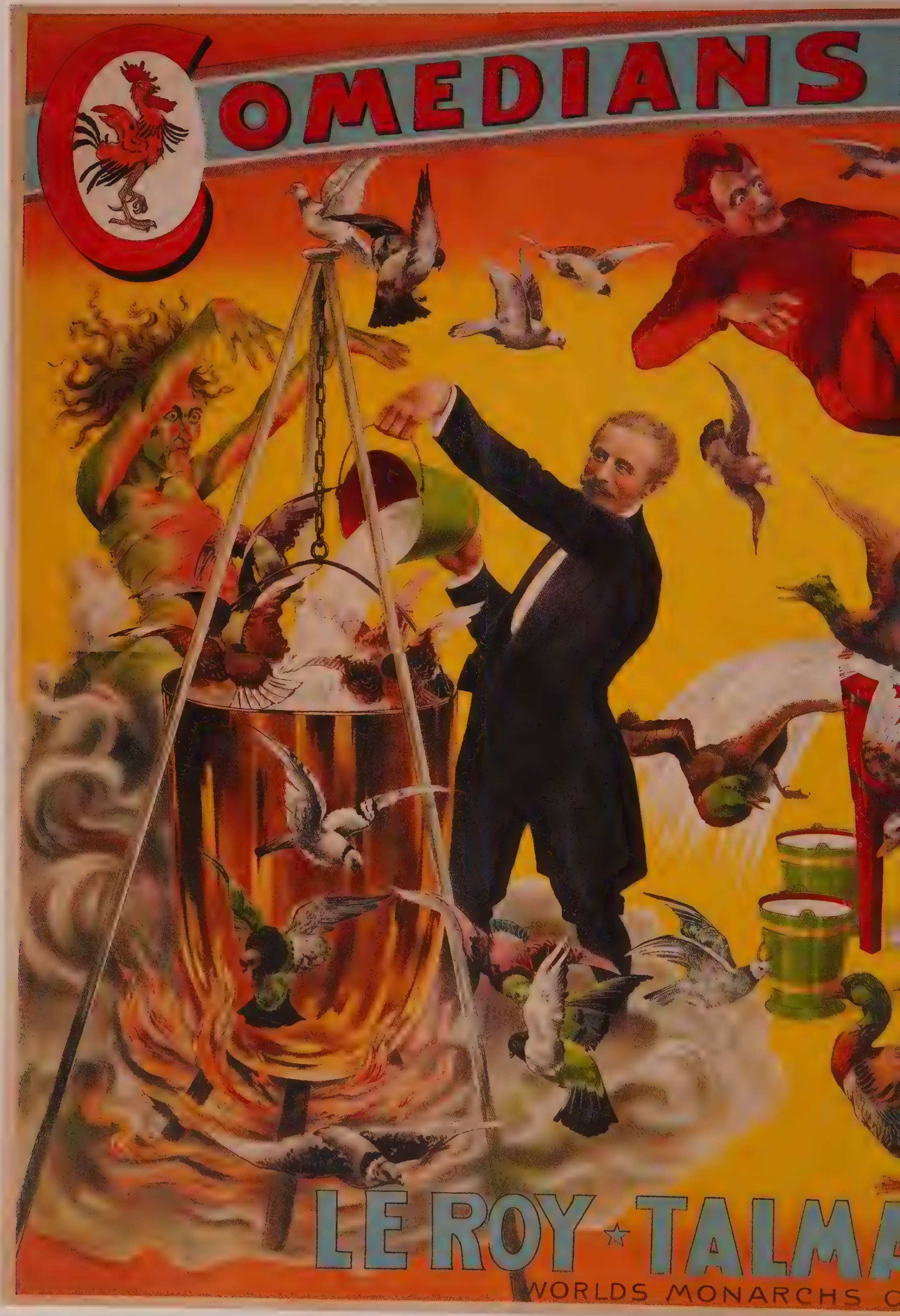
If magic is the oldest performing art, the portrayal of magicians is equally venerable. Whether we accept or discount the theories that sorcerers appear on the wall paintings at Lascaux or on the tombs of the pharaohs, the extraordinary range and variety of magical imagery can be characterized and categorized in many ways. They fall essentially, however, within two distinct arenas: magicians as delineated by artists, and the art of magic delineated to solicit a paying audience for magicians.

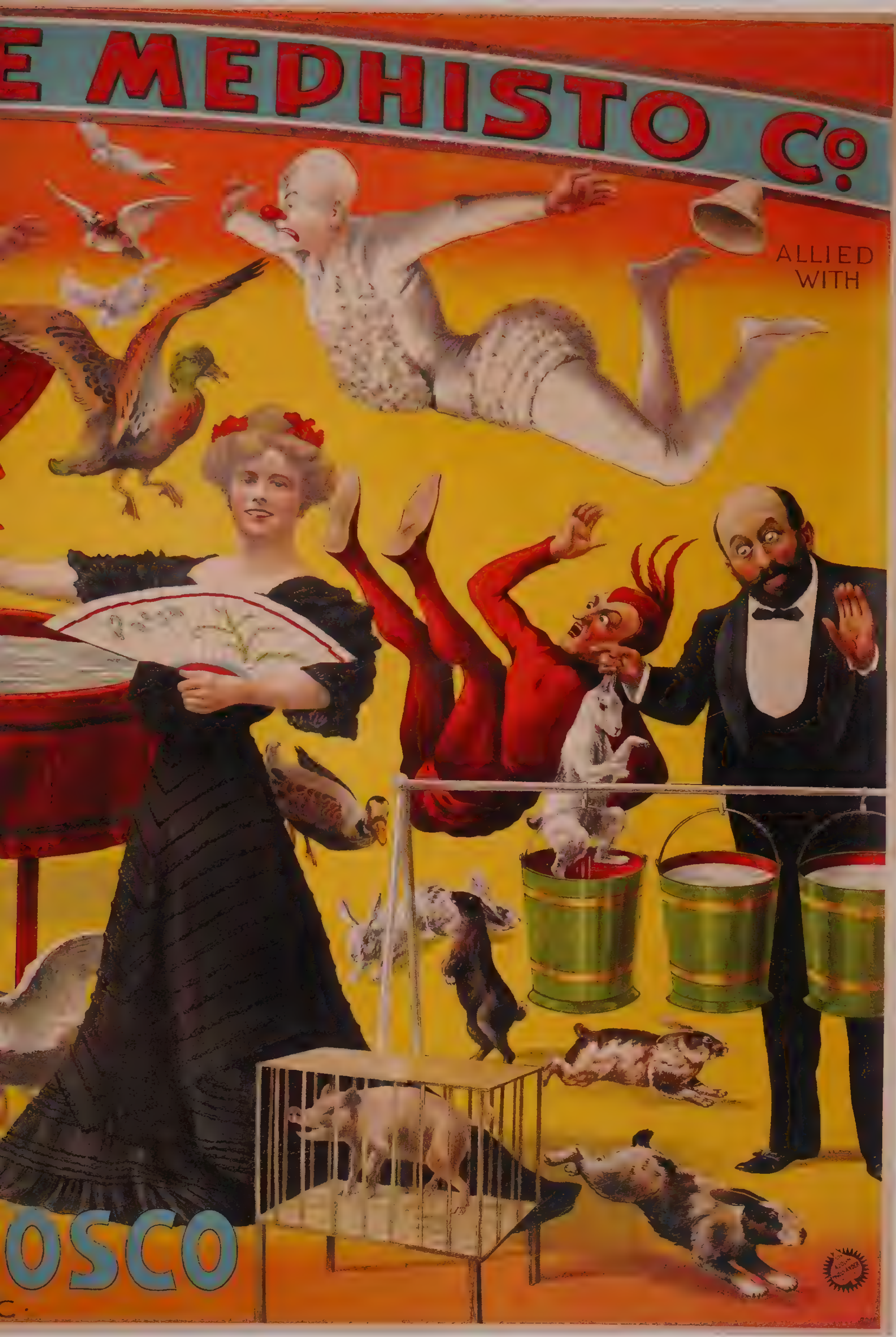
While written accounts of conjuring can be traced to ancient Egypt, both printed and pictorial representations produced in earnest date to the 15th century. The classic cups-and-balls effect, almost certainly the most frequently rendered illusion in the history of magic, was already predominant at this time. Everyday scenes incorporating street performers or physical anomalies were among the earliest of secular images. By the 16th century, descriptions of magic accompanied by illustrations could be found in printed books, and magicians were depicted by some of the world's great artists, such as Hieronymus Bosch and Pieter Bruegel.

A medallion of the mysterious Girolamo Scotto by the Milanese sculptor Antonio Abondio was struck in 1580. Produced in different metals and with a number of variants, it launched what would become a daunting array of artifacts picturing prestidigitators. Perhaps the first print of a named conjurer captured *in flagrante delicto* was engraved by the important Czech artist Wenceslas Hollar in 1651. It featured Blaise Manfre of Malta, whose act spewing impressive streams of color-changing liquid is both pictured and described. Significantly, this was an attempt to both commemorate and advertise his superior spouting. Magicians like Manfre soon became the subjects of broadsides that previewed and heralded their shows, and of souvenir prints that were issued when warranted by their fame.

OPPOSITE: **ca. 1920s** Okito (Theodore Bamberg) was part of magic's greatest dynasty of performers. Long Tack Sam, the Chinese conjurer, once saw the identical lithograph printed with the name Fu Manchu instead of Okito. He angrily confronted the performer only to find out that Fu Manchu was Bamberg's son David. Theo had presented the poster to his son as a present.


OKITO


COMEDIANS
LE ROY ★ TALM
WORLDS MONARCHS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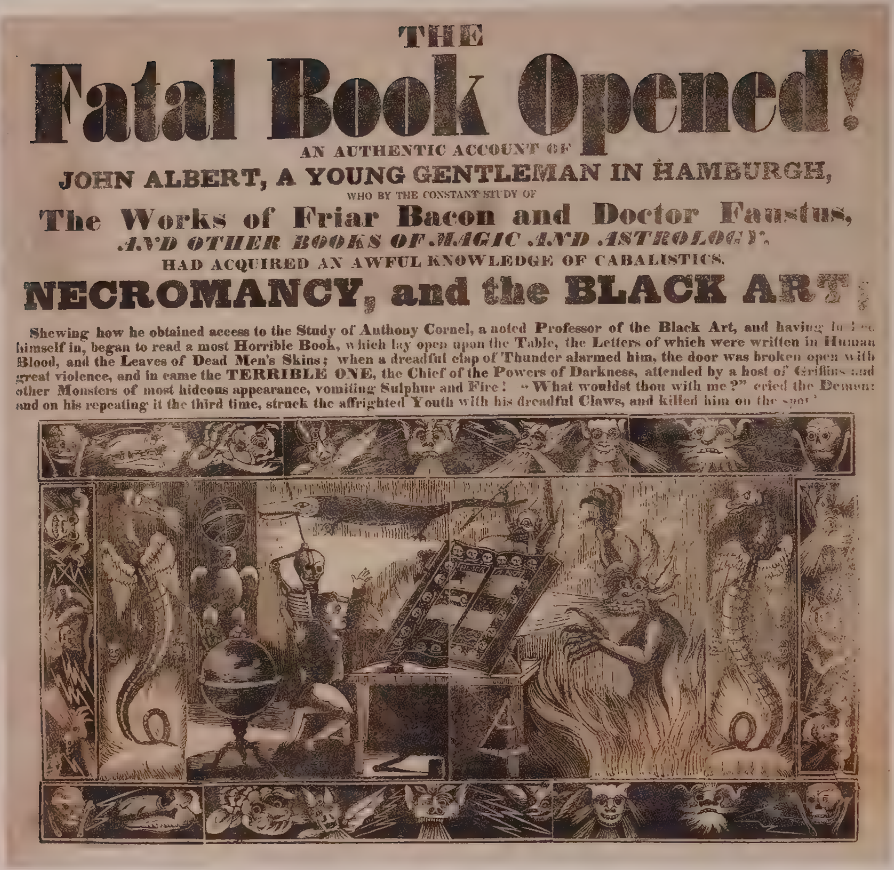


THE

Fatal Book Opened!

AN AUTHENTIC ACCOUNT OF

JOHN ALBERT, A YOUNG GENTLEMAN IN HAMBURGH,

WHO BY THE CONSTANT STUDY OF

The Works of Friar Bacon and Doctor Faustus,

AND OTHER BOOKS OF MAGIC AND ASTROLOGY,

HAD ACQUIRED AN AWFUL KNOWLEDGE OF CABALISTICS,

NECROMANCY, and the BLACK ART;

Shewing how he obtained access to the Study of Anthony Cornel, a noted Professor of the Black Art, and having locked himself in, began to read a most Horrible Book, which lay open upon the Table, the Letters of which were written in Human Blood, and the Leaves of Dead Men's Skins; when a dreadful clap of Thunder alarmed him, the door was broken open with great violence, and in came the TERRIBLE ONE, the Chief of the Powers of Darkness, attended by a host of Griffins and other Monsters of most hideous appearance, vomiting Sulphur and Fire! "What wouldst thou with me?" cried the Demon: and on his repeating it the third time, struck the affrighted Youth with his dreadful Claws, and killed him on the spot!

Prints, Posters & Pats of Butter

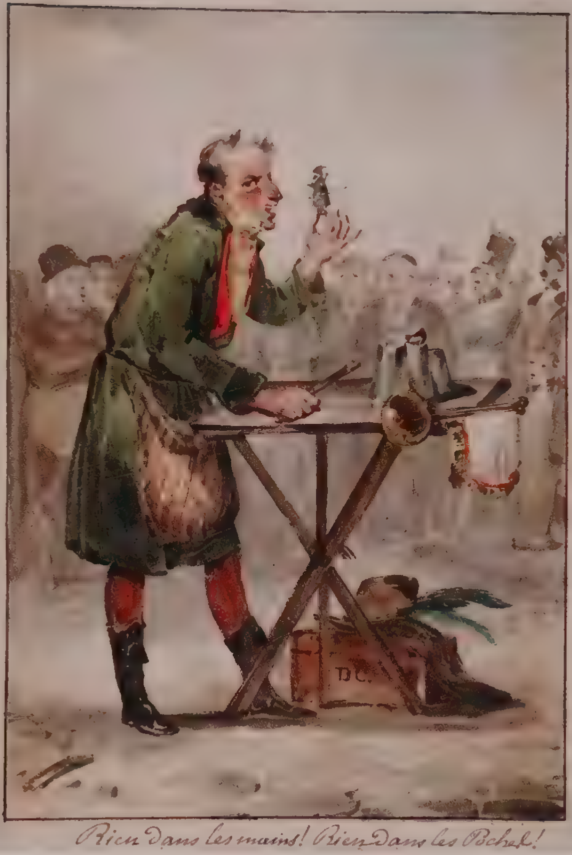
In the days before the advent of film and television, the success of performers was predicated on both visual and verbal inducements to see them. A wide variety of playbills, often combining florid typography and grandiose language, were commissioned to attract audiences. Over the centuries, illustrations of magicians have graced cigar labels, billboards, *cartes de visite*, admission tickets, pocket mirrors, postcards, ink blotters, fan mounts, dishes, brochures, handbills, playing cards, puzzles, lantern slides, stationery, sheet music, trade cards, and bank checks. Houdini once employed seven men to doff their hats and bow forward, revealing the letters of his name on their bald pates. John Henry Anderson, the Scottish conjurer whom Houdini acknowledged as his predecessor in Barnum-like bombast, stretched our definition of ephemera by having his portrait impressed on pats of butter. None of them are known to have survived.

As magicians drew attention to themselves, artists began to depict celebrities as magicians. Monarchs, ministers, presidents, and captains of industry were caricatured as tricksters by numerous and notable artists including Hogarth, Rowlandson, Gillray, Daumier, and Cruikshank. At the same time, performing magicians demanded less pejorative portrayals in the art they commissioned. In an attempt to promote themselves in a competitive world, conjurers might integrate current events and design or reshape their illusions to reflect the day's headlines. (Robert Houdin, for example, claimed to levitate his son by exposing him to the controversial new anesthetic, ether.)

To further broaden their appeal, conjurers might choose to demonstrate arts allied to magic, or to promote or present themselves in collaboration with performers such as puppeteers, hand-shadow artists, contortionists, or the exhibitors of motion pictures. Anderson, when he returned to Great Britain from an American tour in 1853, became the impresario for an innovative troupe of Chinese jugglers. Even more surprising was Anderson's management of a diminutive pair of "Aztec Lilliputians" said to be the only survivors of a sacerdotal caste of ancient priests. The children were actually microcephalic Mexican dwarfs. Magicians might align themselves with freaks or beasts of "brute creation." Gifted geese, mathematical mares, and sapient swine often took to the boards to augment the reputations and coffers of their magical masters.

OPPOSITE: **ca. 1840** *The Fatal Book Opened!* warns against the evils of dabbling in the "black arts." Illustrated by a lurid and impressive woodcut, the broadside was printed by William Walker in Otley, England. The firm is known to magic collectors for its publication of some elusive conjuring pamphlets.

RIGHT: **ca. 1790** This original watercolor dates from the end of the 18th century. The French street magician can be seen holding a small doll of a soldier that he would mysteriously vanish. This effect was known as the Bonus Genus or the Little Messenger. Although it is rarely seen today, it was featured for hundreds of years and was a favorite of Charles Dickens whenever he performed as a conjurer.

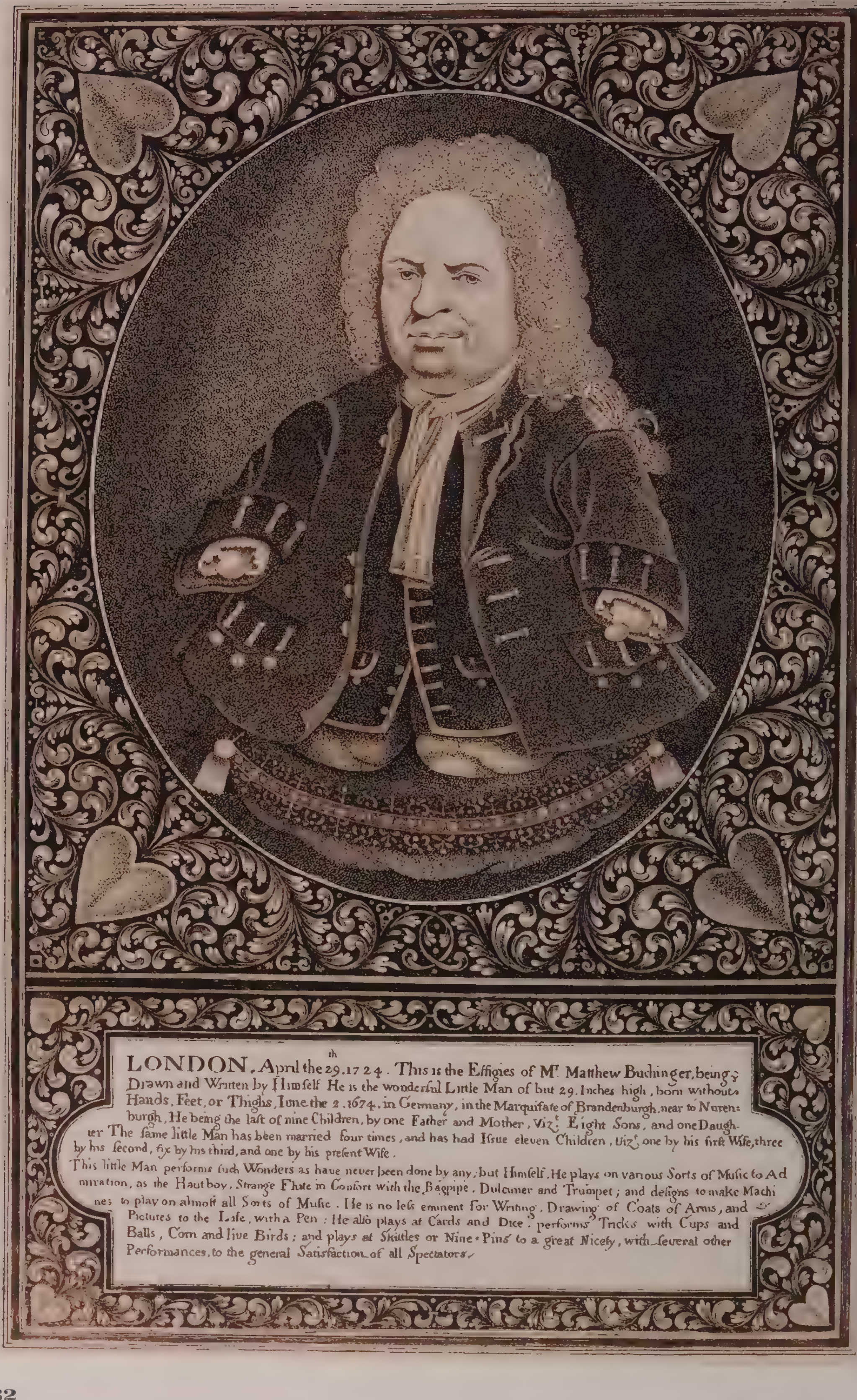

DC
Rien dans les mains! Rien dans les Pochet!

Wonder-workers could demonstrate superior strength or invulnerability. Some, like Patrizio and Holtum, fielded shells fired from cannons, and as far back as the 16th century, conjurers risked injury and even death by attempting to catch bullets in their hands or teeth; not all were successful. Signora Girardelli held boiling oil in her palms to cook her breakfast egg. Chabert, "the Human Salamander," digested acid with no deleterious effects. He then entered an oven to sear a raw sirloin without singeing himself. Phantasmagoria showmen like Schröpfer, Philipsthal, and Robertson projected ghostly images to audiences that may have experienced fear as well as amazement. Some conjurers misrepresented their illusions as scientific advances, while others concealed scientific principles to accomplish their trickery. Both of those techniques were displayed in the exhibition of automata—ingenious machines imbued with marvelous lifelike movements and occasionally designed, as with the Turkish chess player, to seem capable of rational thought.

A Universal Language of Illusion

Magic may be the most universal of the performing arts. The chess-playing Turk, designed by a Hungarian nobleman, appealed to the audiences of Western Europe, but Turkey spawned an impressive group of conjurers as well. By the 16th century, native illusionists were featured in beautiful Ottoman miniatures. Vanek, a Hungarian physics professor turned magician, became a sensation performing in Turkey. A Vanek playbill for a performance in Delhi was printed in Urdu and Persian. In India, the street-conjuring fakirs have spawned numerous illustrations and have barely changed their repertoires in hundreds of years.

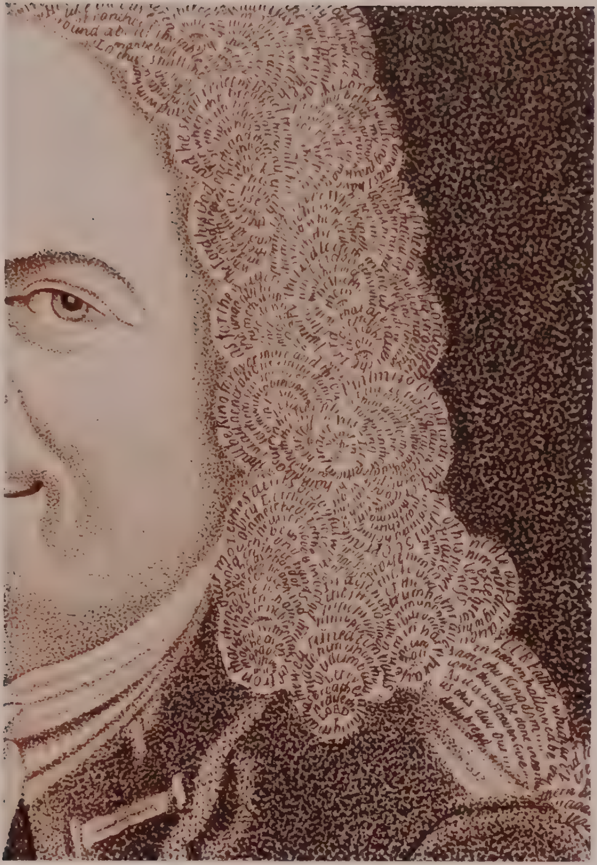
China and Japan have an independent but similar conjuring tradition, and numerous performers of merit. Western magicians often toured Russia, where illusionists enjoyed great popularity, and Kio, a Russian illusionist, was a headliner in the modern Moscow Circus that toured in America. Indian magicians appeared to great acclaim in London in the early 19th century, and some 50 years later Japanese conjurers first appeared in the West. The German Alexander Heimburger performed his mysteries for President Polk at the White House and for the king of Brazil. Robert-Houdin was sent by the French government to compete with native necromancers in Algeria. Hofzinser, the great Viennese sleight-of-hand artist, performed his version of the Japanese butterfly effect for the Austrian royal family in 1860. Ching Ling Foo and Long Tack Sam, amazing Chinese magicians, topped



LONDON, April the 29th.1724. This is the Effigies of M^{r}. Matthew Buchinger, being Drawn and Written by Himſelf He is the wonderful Little Man of but 29. Inches high, born without Hands, Feet, or Thighs, Iune the 2.1674. in Germany, in the Marquiſate of Brandenburgh, near to Nurenburgh, He being the laſt of nine Children, by one Father and Mother, Viz^{t}. Eight Sons, and one Daughter The ſame little Man has been married four times, and has had Iſsue eleven Children, Viz^{t}. one by his firſt Wife, three by his ſecond, ſix by his third, and one by his preſent Wife.

This little Man performs ſuch Wonders as have never been done by any; but Himſelf. He plays on various Sorts of Muſic to Admiration, as the Hautboy, Strange Flute in Conſort with the Bagpipe, Dulcimer and Trumpet; and deſigns to make Machines to play on almoſt all Sorts of Muſic. He is no leſs eminent for Writing, Drawing of Coats of Arms, and Pictures to the Life, with a Pen: He alſo plays at Cards and Dice, performs Tricks with Cups and Balls, Corn and live Birds; and plays at Skittles or Nine-Pins to a great Nicety, with ſeveral other Performances, to the general Satisfaction of all Spectators.

OPPOSITE AND RIGHT: 1724 Matthew Buchinger was born in Germany in 1674 without hands or feet. Despite this handicap, he was one of the most famous magicians of his day. He played more than half a dozen instruments, danced the hornpipe, and effected trick bowling shots. He was a remarkably accomplished calligrapher, specializing in miniature work known as micrography. The detail of this stipple engraving reveals seven psalms and the Lord's Prayer within the curls of his wig.



bills in vaudeville. European magicians toured America, and Americans traveled to Europe. Australia was a frequent stomping ground for these acts. Cross-pollination was inevitable in this profession of globetrotters.

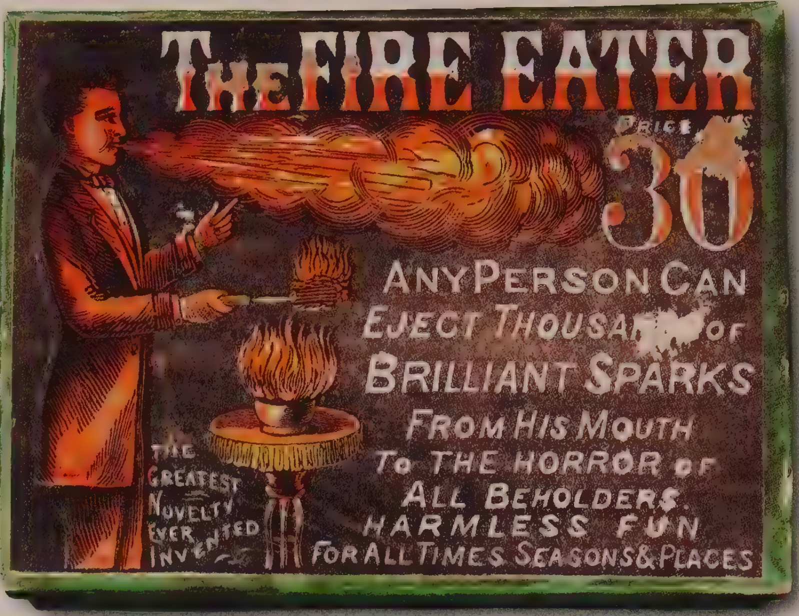
To capitalize on the exotic, magicians could adopt the look and mannerisms of foreign performers. Theodore Bamberg, the scion of a Dutch Jewish magic dynasty, was transformed into Okito, and his son David became a star in South America as Fu Manchu. Ching Lau Lauro was an Englishman, as was D'Alvini, who performed under the unfortunate billing of "the Jap of Japs." Dicksonn, the French performer at the Theatre Robert-Houdin, appeared as a celestial, as did the American William Ellsworth Robinson, who headlined as Chung Ling Soo. To enhance the illusion that he was Chinese, Robinson refused to speak English in public.

Assuming a character, however, was far less egregious than identity theft. Many of the world's great conjurers suffered at the hands of imposters pilfering their illusions, their imagery, and even their names. Houdini spawned a slew of alliterative adepts who tried to cash in on his fame: Howdini, Oudini, Nordini, and Martini Szeny. Signor Blitz had at least 13 appropriators of his cognomen, and Bartolomeo Bosco perhaps even more. Contrary to playbills that state otherwise, Robert-Houdin, from whom Houdini took his name, never appeared in America. One of the imposters who assumed his identity, perhaps the most audacious of all such conmen, was Henry Graham, an Englishman who also passed himself off as the Continental prestidigitators Frikell, Robin, and Philippe.

The Deceiver Deceived

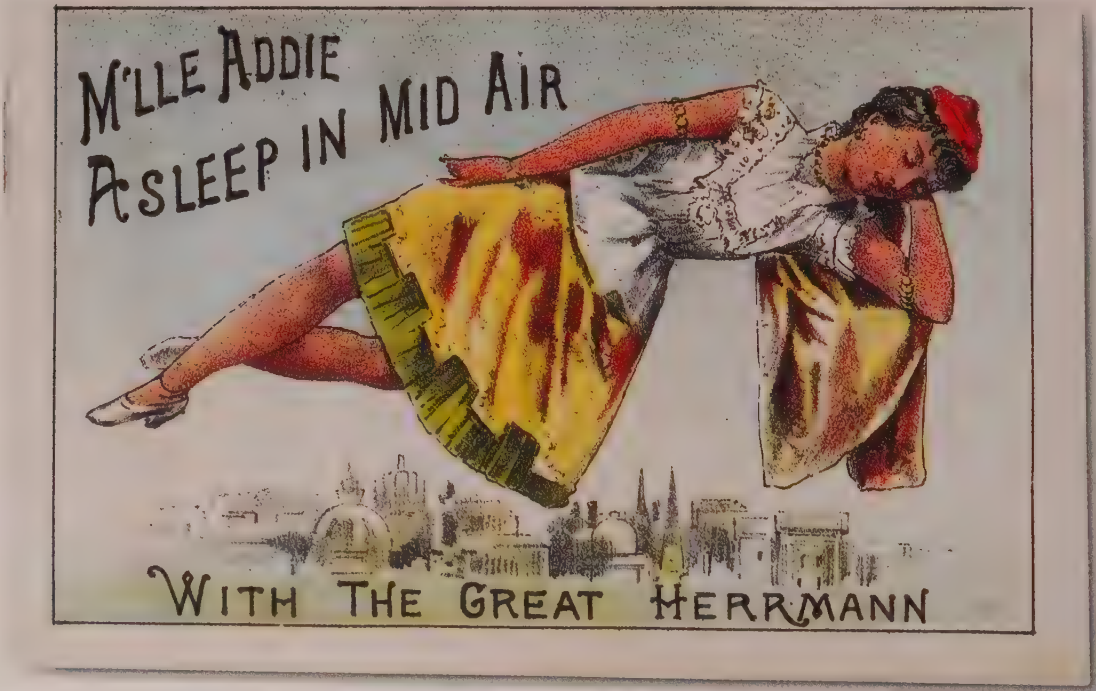
Images of conjurers often reveal self-deception. The subjects appear more handsome, more beautiful, more muscular, more noble, more omniscient, more powerful than they are. They are displayed in settings more elaborate, more costly, and more exotic than any actual venue. Sometimes they feature charlatans and mountebanks like Katterfelto, Cagliostro, or the Count de Saint Germain. Or they can be the subject of ridicule, as in Hogarth's print of Mary Toft, the 18th-century woman said to have produced rabbits—but not from her hat...

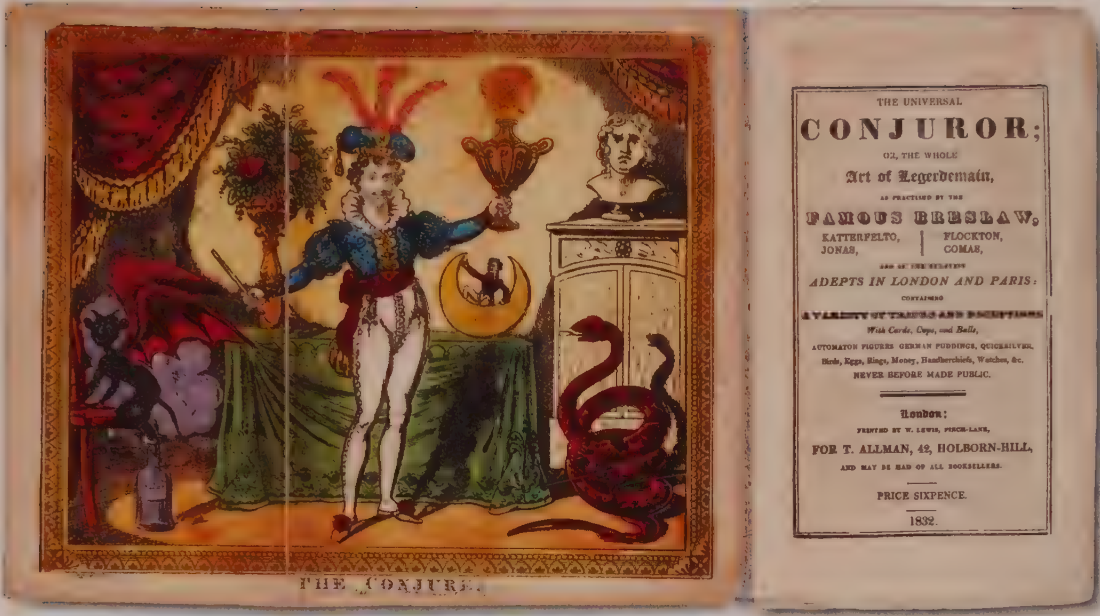
We take delight in the exposure of card-sharping methods as revealed in numerous prints and paintings—some by masters like Georges de la Tour and Caravaggio. When challenged by optical illusions or wonderfully realistic trompe l'oeil studies, we may question our perceptions.


THE FIRE EATER
PRICE
30
ANY PERSON CAN EJECT THOUSANDS OF BRILLIANT SPARKS FROM HIS MOUTH TO THE HORROR OF ALL BEHOLDERS.
HARMLESS FUN FOR ALL TIMES SEASONS & PLACES
THE GREATEST NOVELTY EVER INVENTED

ABOVE: **ca. 1910** While kits with magic tricks have been manufactured for hundreds of years, it is rare to see an outfit specifically aimed at fire-eating. Even with the usual caveats it is difficult to imagine children ever again being presented with the opportunity to learn fire-eating at home.

BELOW: **1880s** This attractive piece, about the size of a standard index card, was manufactured by Seer's lithographers to advertise the performance of Alexander Herrmann and his wife, Adelaide, at the well-known vaudeville emporium Niblo's Garden. Herrmann was billed on the verso as a "Disciple of Mephistopheles."


M'LLE ADDIE
ASLEEP IN MID AIR
WITH THE GREAT HERRMANN


THE CONJURER.

THE UNIVERSAL
CONJUROR;
OR, THE WHOLE
Art of Legerdemain,
AS PRACTISED BY THE
FAMOUS BRESLAW,
KATTERFELTO, | FLOCKTON,
JONAS, | COMAS,
AND OF THE [illegible]
ADEPTS IN LONDON AND PARIS:
CONTAINING
A VARIETY OF [illegible] AND [illegible]
With Cards, Cups, and Balls,
AUTOMATON FIGURES GERMAN PUDDINGS, QUICKSILVER,
Birds, Eggs, Rings, Money, Handkerchiefs, Watches, &c.
NEVER BEFORE MADE PUBLIC.

London:
PRINTED BY W. LEWIS, FINCH-LANE,
FOR T. ALLMAN, 42, HOLBORN-HILL,
AND MAY BE HAD OF ALL BOOKSELLERS.

PRICE SIXPENCE.

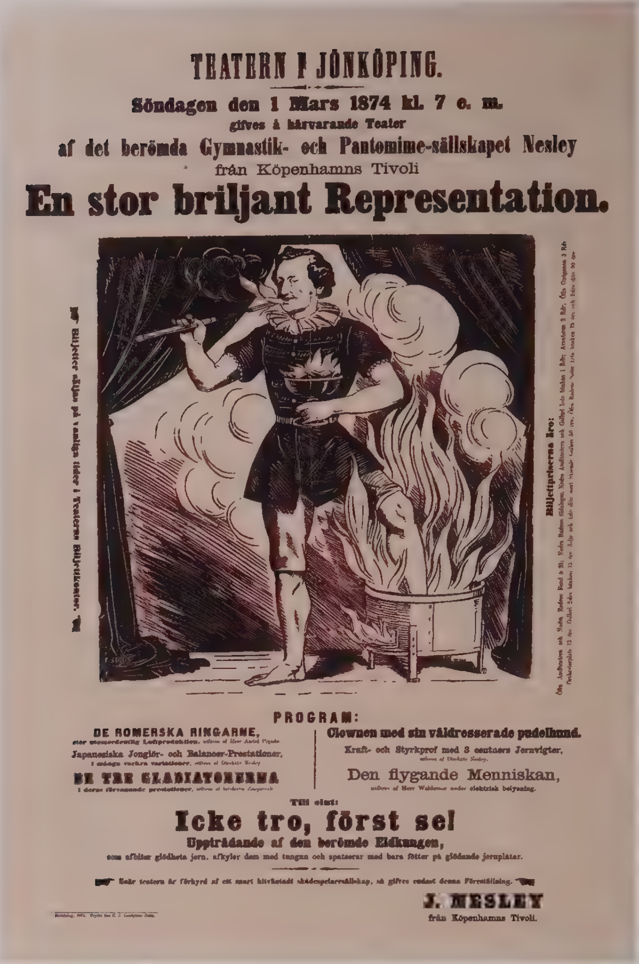
1832.

ABOVE: **1832** A desirable but rarely discussed source of magical illustration is to be found in the folding frontispieces of monographs and chapbooks issued primarily in the early 19th century. This example features a striking hand-colored engraving from *The Universal Conjuror*, published in London in 1832.

The multiple pleasures of the magician and his art will be revealed in the images that follow, more than a thousand of them. My favorite may be a 1724 stipple engraving, a self-portrait of Matthew Buchinger (p. 32), one of the most famous figures of his day. The portrait appeals on many levels. It creates intrigue and anticipation and surprise. Buchinger was an excellent musician, dancer, and trick-shot artist. He dazzled with cards, dice, and cups and balls. He was only 29 inches tall and, even more remarkably, had neither legs nor arms. As much as we admire his magic, his most surprising accomplishment was arguably his micrography. He painstakingly fashioned tiny letters with a pen delicately balanced between his flipper-like excrescences. When—under magnification—we look at his wig, we realize that what we had been deceived into thinking was shading or decoration is actually seven complete psalms and the Lord's Prayer (p. 33). Here is a contemporary description of his magical penmanship:

For Hair Stroaks to the Eye they pass,
And yet they're Letters thro' a glass
Thus he with double Art can write
At once to please and cheat the Sight.

RIGHT: 1874 The universality of magic and the allied arts is displayed in this boldly illustrated broadside. The unnamed Scandinavian fire-resistor, under the direction of the Nesley troupe from the Tivoli Gardens in Copenhagen, followed in the tradition of Chabert and Signora Girardelli, who 60 years earlier performed similar feats.



TEATERN I JÖNKÖPING.

Söndagen den 1 Mars 1874 kl. 7 e. m.

gifves å härvarande Teater

af det berömda Gymnastik- och Pantomime-sällskapet Nesley

från Köpenhamns Tivoli

En stor briljant Representation.

☞ Biljetter säljas på vanliga tider i Teaterns Biljettkontor. ☜

Biljettpriserne äro:

PROGRAM:

DE ROMERSKA RINGARNE,

Japanesiska Jonglör- och Balancer-Prestationer,

DE TRE GLADIATORERNA

Clownen med sin väldresserade pudelhund.

Kraft- och Styrkprof med 3 centners Jernvigter,

Den flygande Menniskan,

Till slut:

Icke tro, först se!

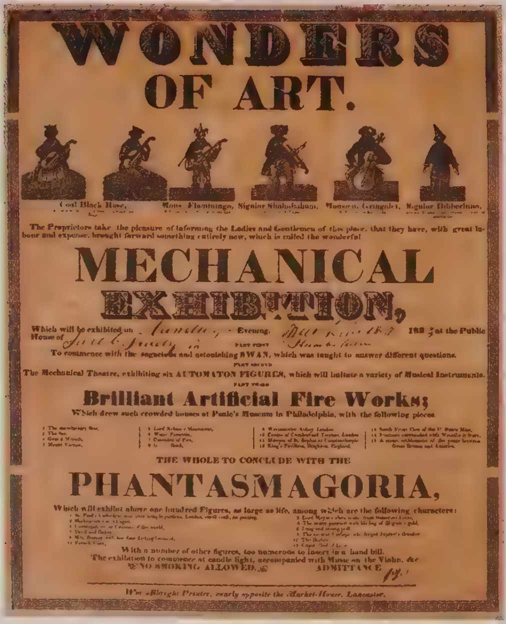
Uppträdande af den berömde Eldkungen,

som afbiter glödheta jern, afkyler dem med tungan och spatserar med bara fötter på glödande jernplåtar.

☞ Enär teatern är förhyrd af ett snart hitväntadt skådespelaresällskap, så gifves endast denna Föreställning. ☜

J. NESLEY

från Köpenhamns Tivoli.



WONDERS OF ART.

Coal Black Rose, Mons. Flamingo, Signior Shakabahum, Monsieur Gringalet, Signior Hibberlino,

The Proprietors take the pleasure of informing the Ladies and Gentlemen of this place, that they have, with great labour and expense, brought forward something entirely new, which is called the wonderful

MECHANICAL EXHIBITION,

Which will be exhibited on Evening, 183 at the Public House of

PART FIRST

To commence with the sagacious and astonishing SWAN, which was taught to answer different questions.

PART SECOND

The Mechanical Theatre, exhibiting six AUTOMATON FIGURES, which will imitate a variety of Musical Instruments.

PART THIRD

Brilliant Artificial Fire Works;

Which drew such crowded houses at Peale's Museum in Philadelphia, with the following pieces.

THE WHOLE TO CONCLUDE WITH THE

PHANTASMAGORIA,

Which will exhibit above one hundred Figures, as large as life, among which are the following characters:

With a number of other figures, too numerous to insert in a hand bill.

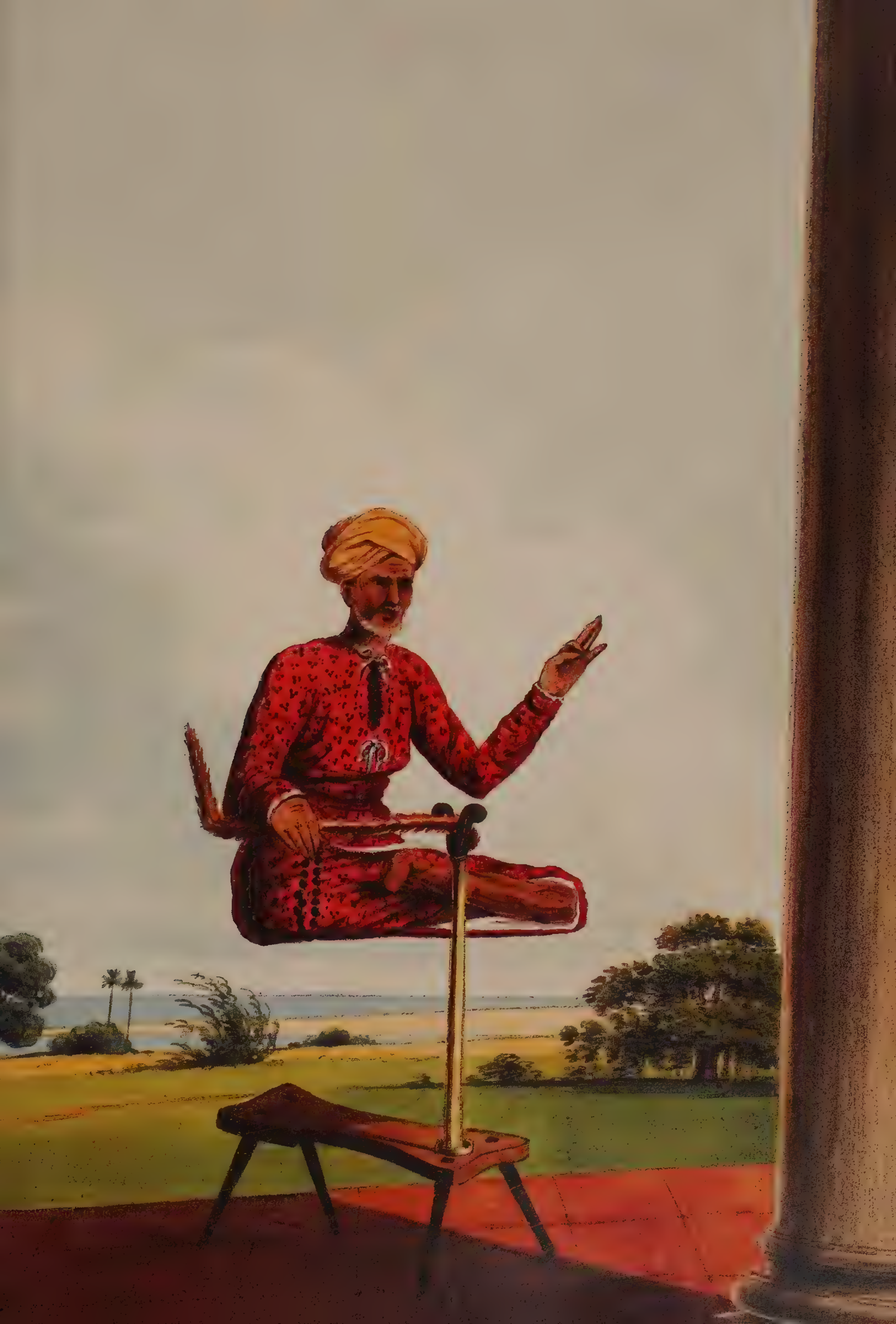
The exhibition to commence at candle light, accompanied with Music on the Violin, &c

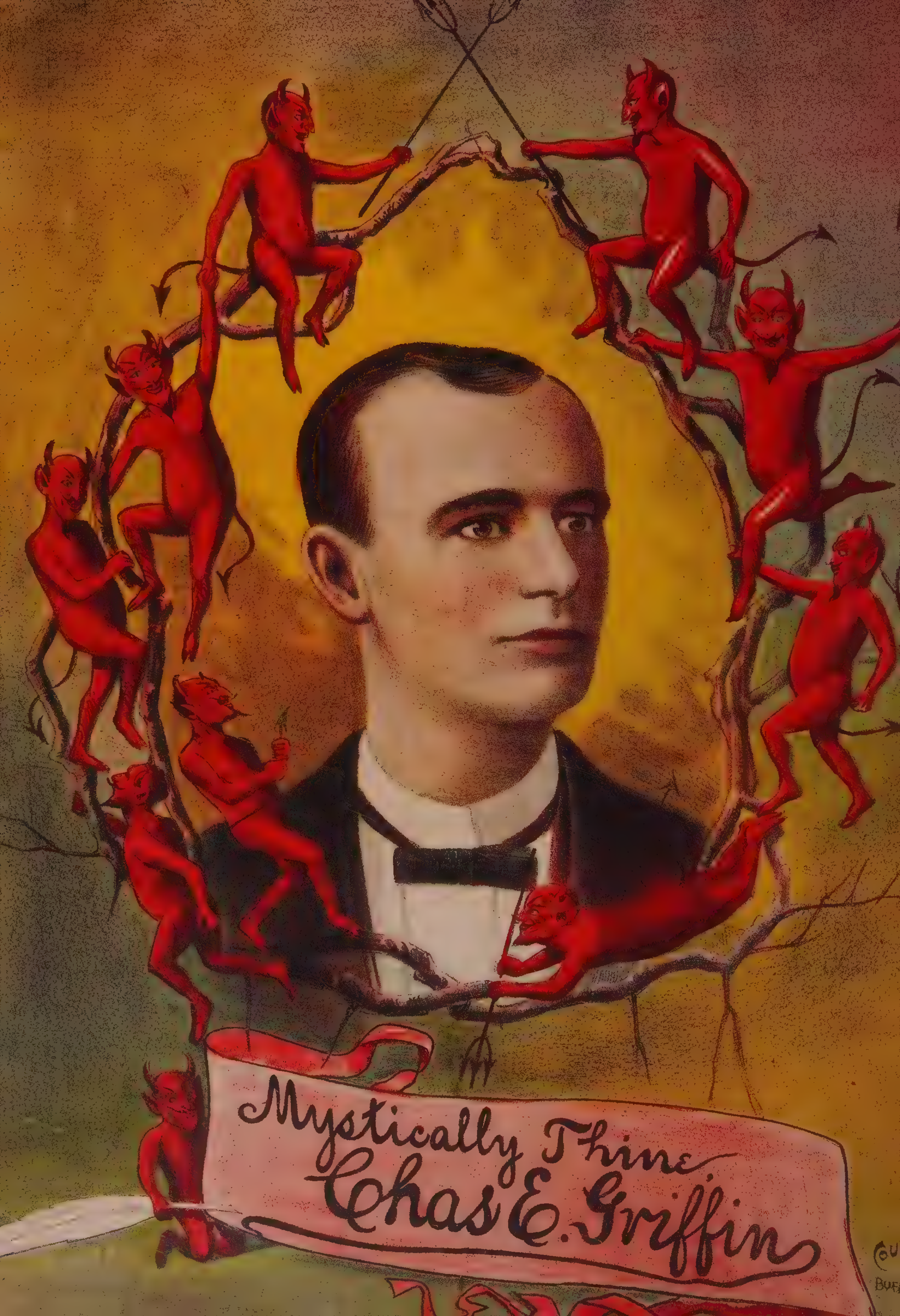
☞ NO SMOKING ALLOWED. ☜ ADMITTANCE

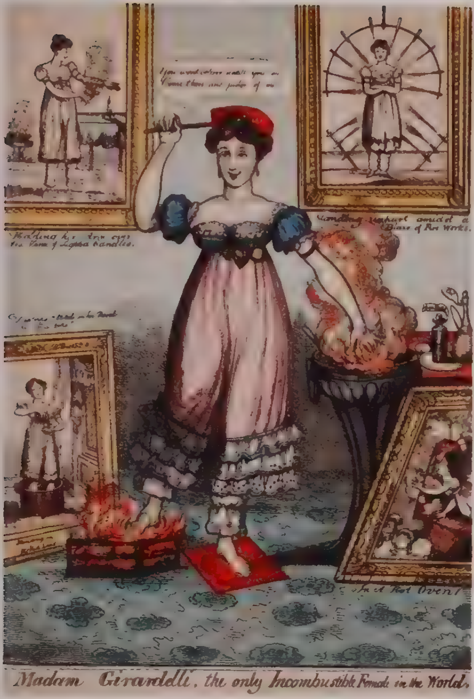
Wm. Albright Printer, nearly opposite the Market-House, Lancaster.

OPPOSITE: 1828 This magnificent hand-colored engraving pictures the suspension illusion as performed by a Cuddapah Brahmin named Sheshal in 1823. He was heralded as "the Air Man." The illustration appeared as an extra plate in select copies of the *Descriptive Letterpress to the Indian Microcosm*, by John Gantz, published in Madras.

LEFT: 1833 This early American playbill featured magic in conjunction with a large variety of exhibitions: automata, fireworks, and ghost-show magic-lantern projections known as phantasmagoria. A popular quasiscientific conjuring effect known as the Philosophical Swan was also demonstrated.



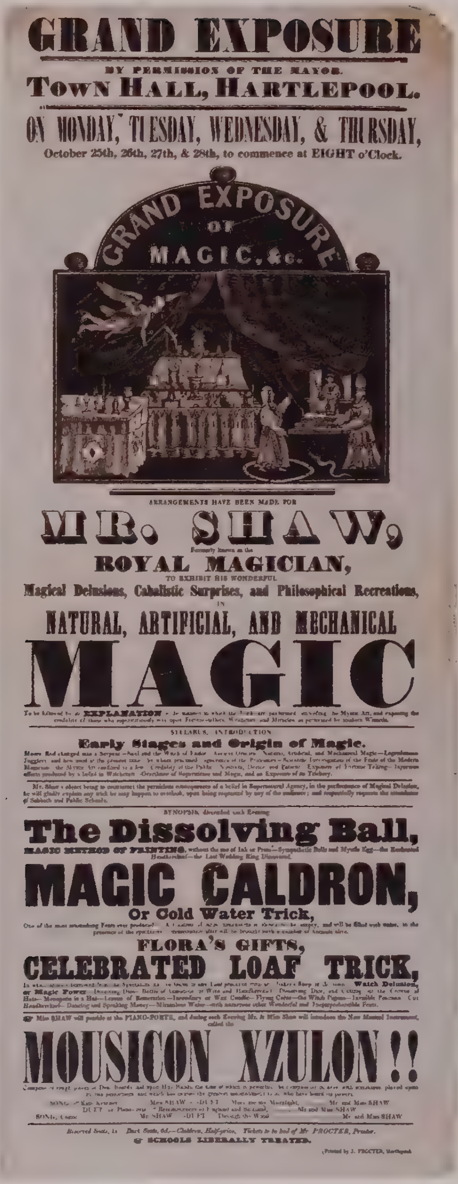

Mystically Thine
Chas E. Griffin
COU
BUF


Standing upright amidst a Blaze of Fire Works.
In a Hot Oven!
Madam Girardelli, the only Incombustible Female in the World.

ABOVE: **ca. 1818** Signora Girardelli, the Italian woman delightfully billed as "the only incombustible female in the world," demonstrated her resistance to fire on the Continent and in England in the second decade of the 19th century. This rare hand-colored print that depicts many of her stunts was published in Ireland.

OPPOSITE: **1880s** Charles Griffin, an advance man for many circuses and the Buffalo Bill show, was a sideshow magician and variety artist who authored pamphlets on contortionists, fire-eating, and snake charming. He was one of the first performers to use what would become the very popular motif of surrounding himself with devilish imps.

RIGHT: **ca. 1855** For variety, some illustrated playbills featured woodcuts in reverse. The subject of this handsome broadside, Mr. Shaw, seemed to be a stalwart of the trade. Actually, he was a minor figure who, according to contemporaneous correspondence, had skipped town without paying his printing bill.



GRAND EXPOSURE

BY PERMISSION OF THE MAYOR.

TOWN HALL, HARTLEPOOL.

ON MONDAY, TUESDAY, WEDNESDAY, & THURSDAY,

October 25th, 26th, 27th, & 28th, to commence at EIGHT o'Clock.

GRAND EXPOSURE OF MAGIC, &c.

ARRANGEMENTS HAVE BEEN MADE FOR

MR. SHAW,

Formerly known as the

ROYAL MAGICIAN,

TO EXHIBIT HIS WONDERFUL

Magical Delusions, Cabalistic Surprises, and Philosophical Recreations,

IN

NATURAL, ARTIFICIAL, AND MECHANICAL

MAGIC

SYLLABUS, INTRODUCTION

Early Stages and Origin of Magic.

SYNOPSIS, diversified each Evening

The Dissolving Ball,

MAGIC CALDRON,

Or Cold Water Trick,

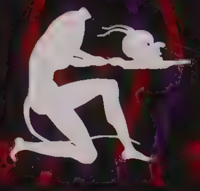
FLORA'S GIFTS,

CELEBRATED LOAF TRICK,

MOUSICON XZULON!!

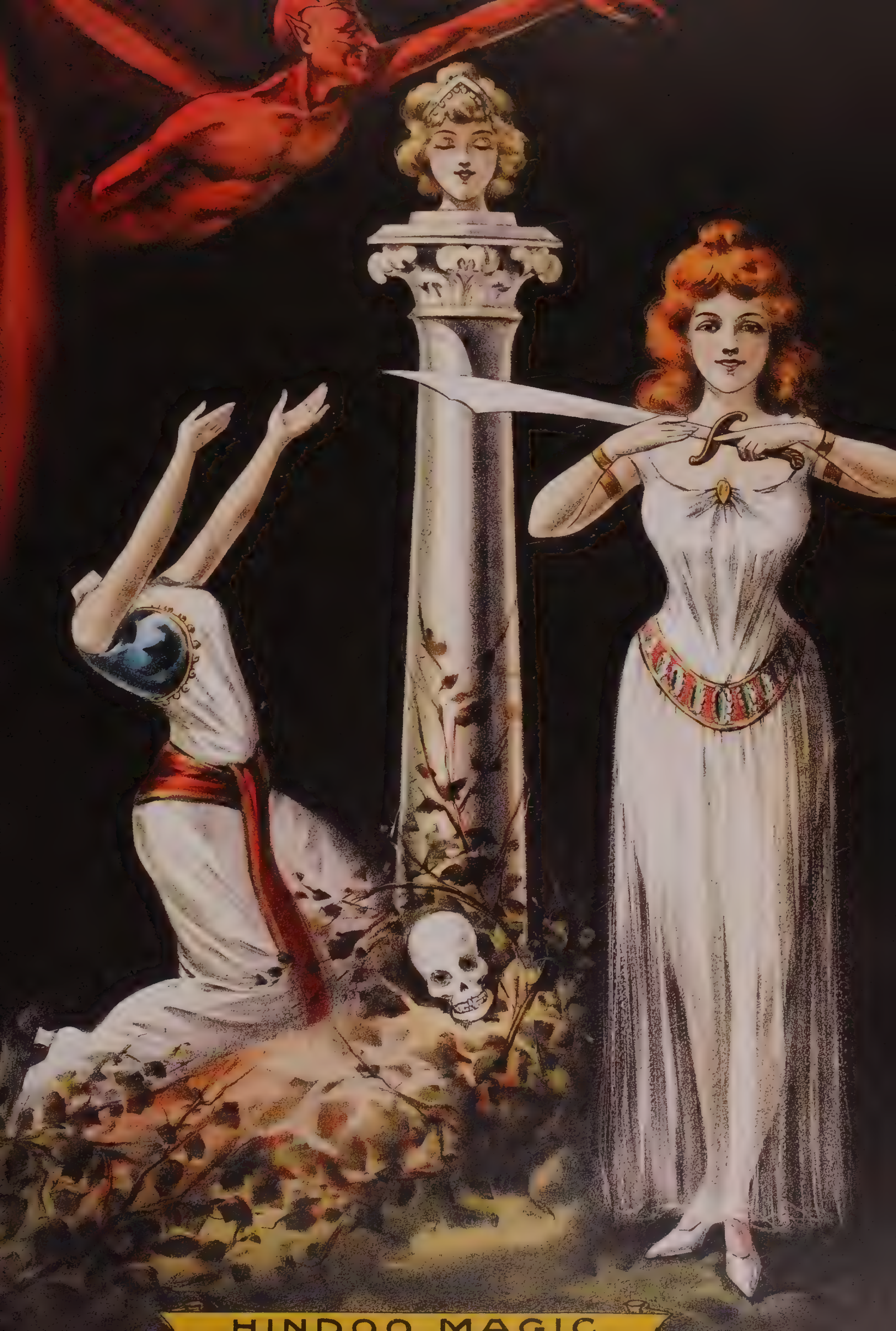
SCHOOLS LIBERALLY TREATED.

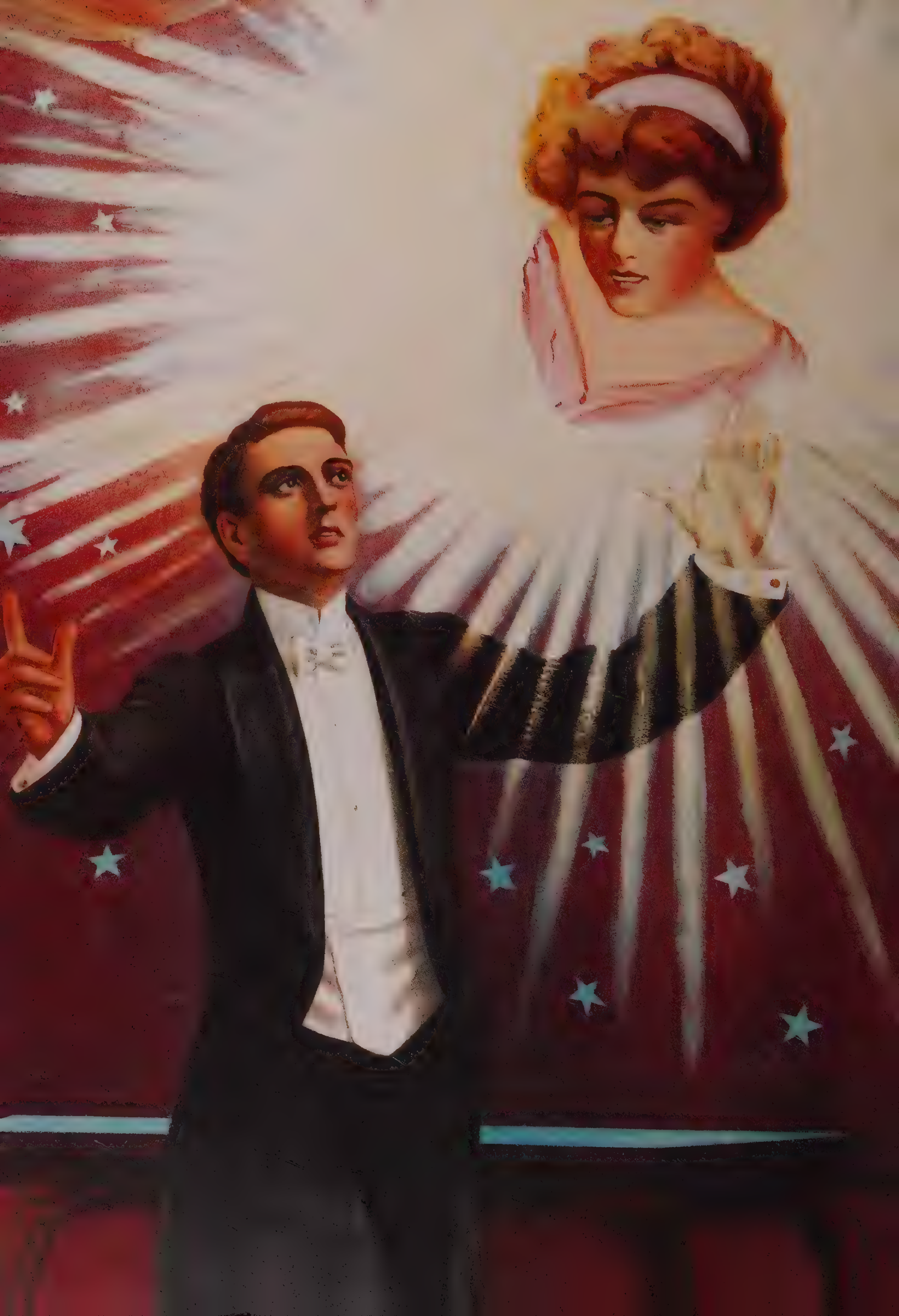
1



CONJURING LIFE AND DEATH: THE ESSENCE OF ILLUSION

Jim Steinmeyer


HINDOO MAGIC



1

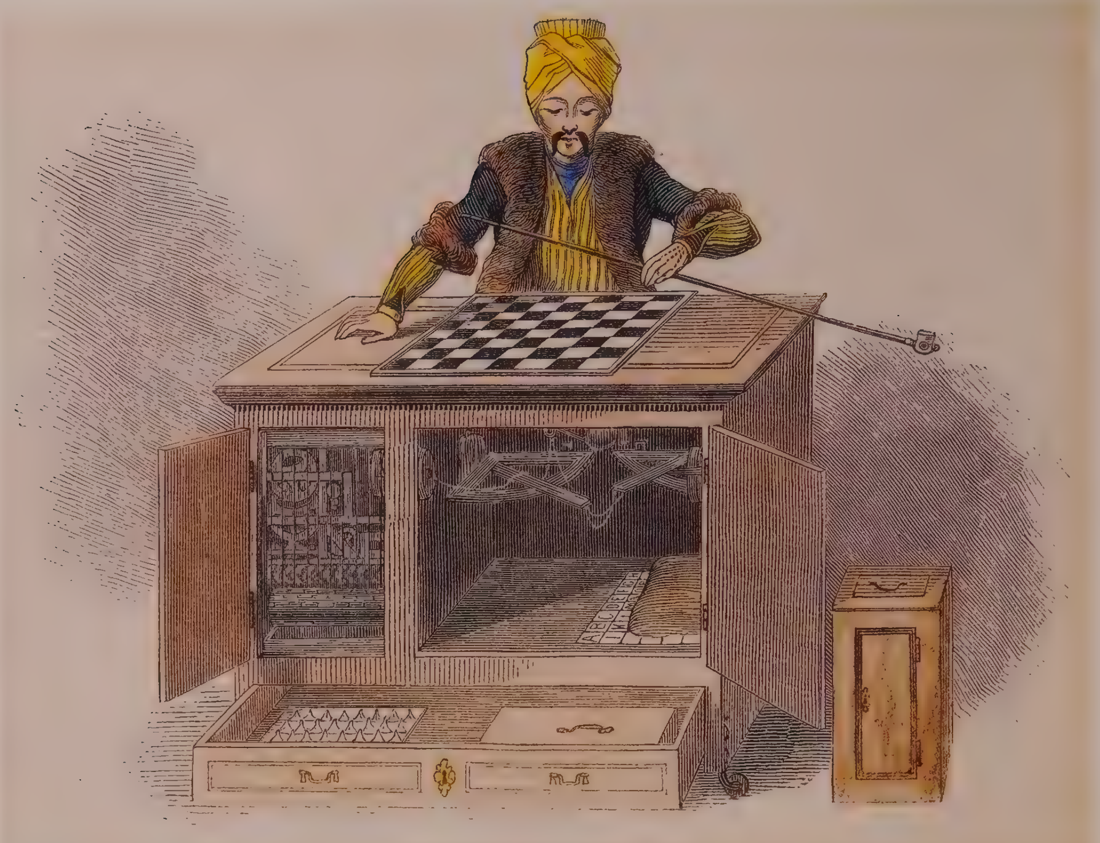
Jim Steinmeyer

CONJURING LIFE AND DEATH: THE ESSENCE OF ILLUSION

In 1769, Empress Maria Theresa of Austria gathered members of her court and family in Vienna to watch a scientific demonstration—the French performer Pelletier with the latest magnetic tricks that had been drawing crowds in Paris. The empress thought the experiments, which she called "supernatural phenomena," were marvelous. But her counselor, a Hungarian scientist and inventor named Wolfgang von Kempelen, sniffed at the performance. He wasn't impressed. Von Kempelen accepted the empress's challenge to create something even more wonderful. In the spring of 1770, he returned to Schönbrunn Palace with a surprise.

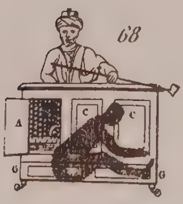
PAGE 41: **ca. 1900** Although there have been few successful female magicians, Adelaide Herrmann was an exception. The widow of the dashing American magician Alexander Herrmann (Herrmann the Great), she performed in vaudeville, a modern high priestess with the powers of life and death. Her presentations were skillful and dramatic, like the decapitation feat pictured on this poster.

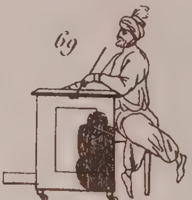
OPPOSITE: **ca. 1910** This stock poster dramatizes Servais Le Roy's innovative Asrah levitation—a poetic analogy for life and death. An assistant reclined on a table and was covered with a cloth. She floated off the table, and when the cloth was pulled away, she suddenly disappeared.

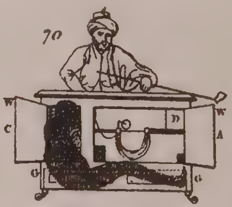

THE AUTOMATON CHESS PLAYER.

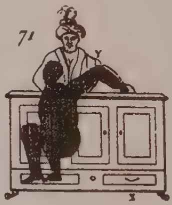
Checkmate: A Lesson in Deception

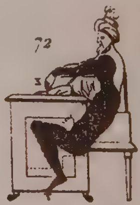
Von Kempelen had constructed a life-size automaton—a windup robotic figure—of a Turkish chess player. His face carved in wood with a languorous expression, wearing a fur-trimmed robe and turban and gripping a long-stemmed pipe, the Turk was seated behind a large low wooden chest. In front of him, on top of the chest, was a wooden chessboard. The Hungarian inventor proudly displayed the mechanism to the empress. He opened doors in the chest so the court could see the interior. It was almost completely empty, except for a clockwork mechanism, cams, rods, and levers to animate the figure. There was nothing concealed in the cabinet. He then pushed aside the Turk's velvet robe and opened panels to show inside the seated figure, demonstrating that the Turk was nothing more than machinery. Von Kempelen then locked the doors of the chest, wound the mechanism, and placed the red and white chess pieces atop the board. An adversary was selected from the court to sit opposite the Turk and play a game of chess. The mechanism clicked and whirred as the automaton made its first move, swinging its arm above the board, reaching down to pick up a piece, and moving it deliberately to another square. The game proceeded with the opponent's





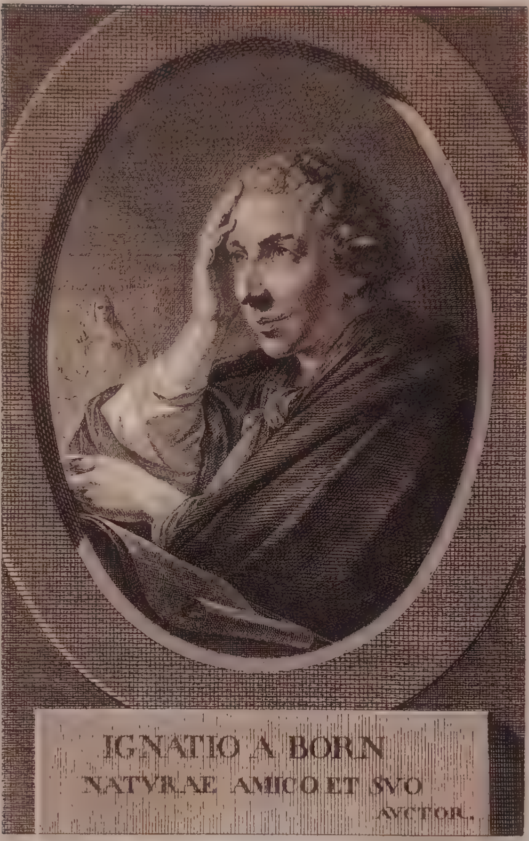


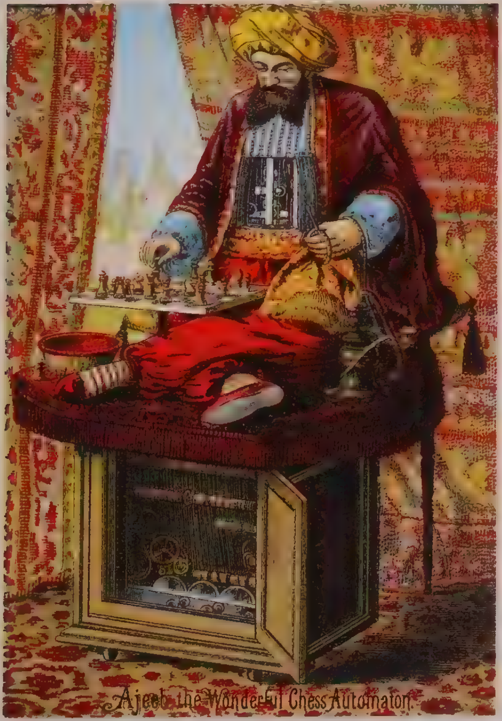




OPPOSITE, TOP AND BOTTOM: **ca. 1820 and 1839** Baron Wolfgang von Kempelen's automaton Chess Player appeared to be a robotic mechanical figure, but was actually an ingenious fraud. Although the cabinet was shown to the audience, a concealed assistant operated the figure, as diagrammed in David Brewster's 1839 *Letters on Natural Magic*, below.

RIGHT: **1791** Baron von Kempelen was a talented inventor and engineer. He created the automaton Chess Player to amuse and impress Empress Maria Theresa of Austria in 1769, but its fame quickly attracted audiences and inspired controversy. The illusion was so baffling, and the promise of a thinking machine so intriguing, that showmen exhibited the Chess Player throughout Europe and America until it was destroyed by fire in 1854.

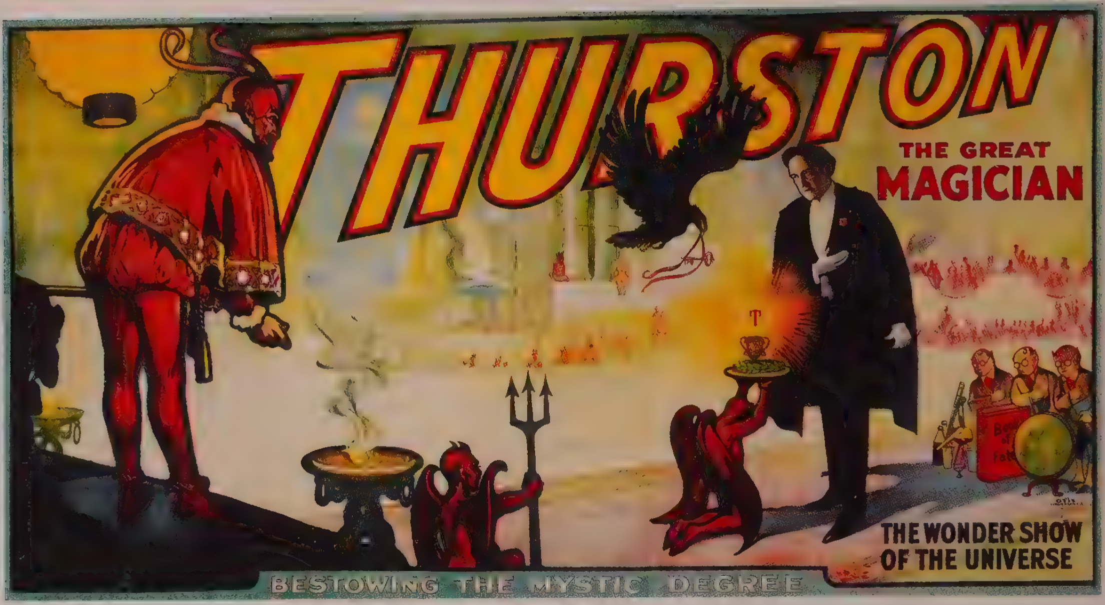



Ajeeb the Wonderful Chess Automaton.

move. The Turk continued, and played insightfully. He nodded twice when he'd placed his opponent's queen in jeopardy; he nodded three times to signal the end of the game: checkmate.

Von Kempelen must have intended his invention to "checkmate" Pelletier—a necessary, expedient diversion to curry favor with the empress. Von Kempelen was a serious scientist, architect, naturalist, and hydraulic engineer who later studied the human voice and served as director general for the Hungarian salt mines. He was not a magician. His invention had been inspired by the popular automata of the 18th century—expensive

LEFT: **1886** The famous Chess Player inspired other mechanical chess machines. Ajeeb, first created in 1867, had a long career and was a favorite at the Eden Musée, a New York City dime museum of odd exhibits. Like his predecessor, Ajeeb was a fraud, with a player concealed inside.



ABOVE: **ca. 1925** The American magician Howard Thurston performed a modern, sophisticated show. But his advertising used a pastiche of ancient mystic symbols to portray his powers. In this billboard-size poster, even the Devil bows to Thurston. The magician played the part of a modern Prometheus, the keeper of arcane secrets.

OPPOSITE: **ca. 1913** On this colorful poster, the American magician and Lyceum performer Fredrik the Great (Alexander Fredrik) is portrayed studying the works of Faustus. The Devil and his minions attend to the magician, offering the key to unlock the secrets of life and death. The symbols are timeless and intriguing, even for modern audiences.

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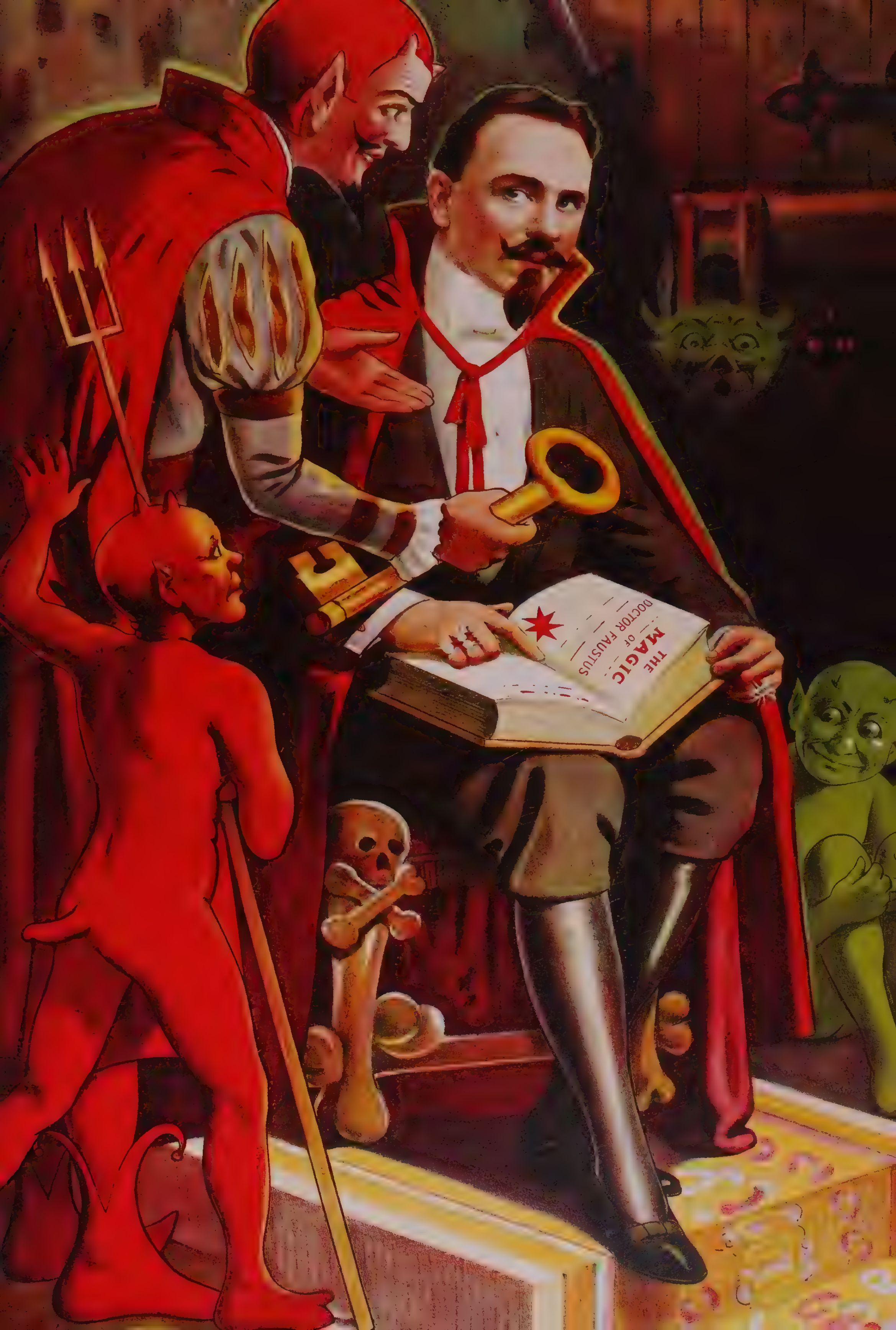
clockwork figures that could repeat simple actions. His Chess Player seemed to be something even more wonderful: a thinking machine. In fact, under duress, von Kempelen had resorted to trickery. A real human chess player operated the figure from inside the chest; a series of optical and mechanical effects concealed this person from the audience's view. The Chess Player drew so much intrigue that von Kempelen soon tired of demonstrating it for audiences who visited his workshop. He dismantled the machine, explaining that it had been damaged. To friends, he admitted that it was "a mere trifle" and merely "illusion." In the hands of other owners, the famous Chess Player had a long, successful career, beating Napoleon, delighting Benjamin Franklin, and inspiring analysis by Edgar Allan Poe.

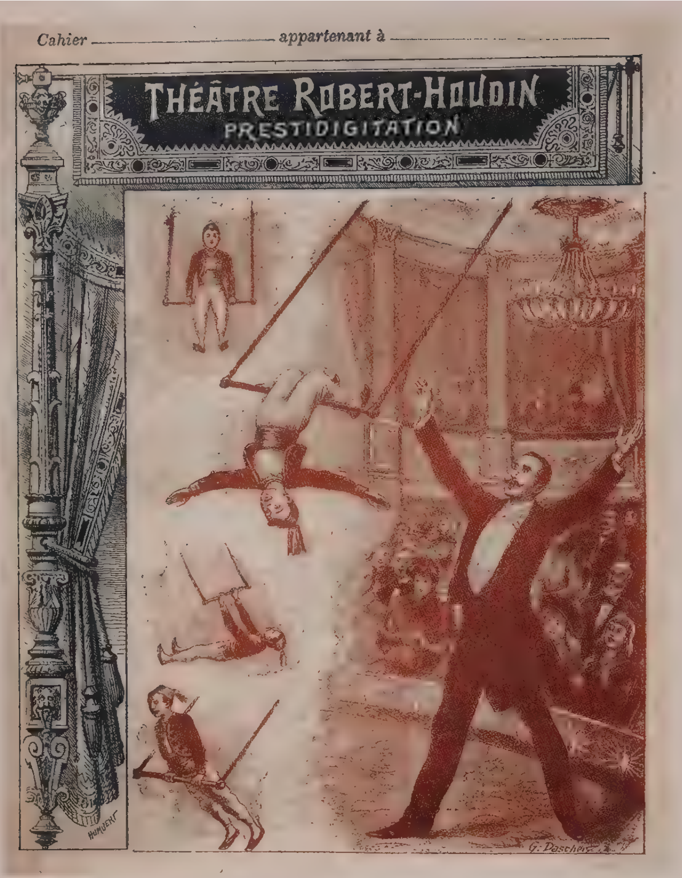
Von Kempelen's bold deception was a perfect lesson in the power of magic. His wooden chest inspired a wide range of illusions. A century later, Victorian magicians specialized in a rash of similar deceptions that have now become cliché: showing a wooden chest or cabinet to be empty, slamming its doors shut and then opening them again so an attractive woman could emerge. Von Kempelen had proved, accidentally, to be an excellent magician, even if he never fully appreciated the importance of illusion or the vital, inspiring influence of wonder. One of his friends, the author Karl Gottlieb von Windisch, witnessed the Chess Player at Maria Theresa's court, and later played opposite the mysterious Turk. "Is it an illusion?" Windisch wrote. "So be it. But it is, then, an illusion which does honor to the human mind."

The Prometheus Myth

Even more, the Chess Player was an illusion that honored a classic myth. The Greek god Prometheus had supposedly created man from a handful of clay. The mythic Pygmalion, Goethe's *Faust*, and Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (which she subtitled *Or, The Modern Prometheus*) all repeated the tale of the artist, wizard, or scientist who risks everything for the knowledge of life and death. The ability to breathe life into the inanimate—in von Kempelen's case, to assemble a series of gears, wheels, and springs that could actually think like a human being—was an early bit of science fiction that was too delicious for audiences to ignore. The promise of this achievement was so audacious and spellbinding that it superseded any question of fraud.

The Prometheus myth has always been a touchstone for magicians, and a continual lure for audiences. In the


THE
MAGIC
OF
DOCTOR FAUSTUS



LEFT: **ca. 1885** Legendary French magician and inventor Jean Eugène Robert-Houdin created his tiny mechanical acrobat, Antonio Diavolo, in 1849. It was premiered at his Paris theater. This engraving, from the decade after Robert-Houdin's death, shows the French magician Dicksonn presenting the famous acrobat.

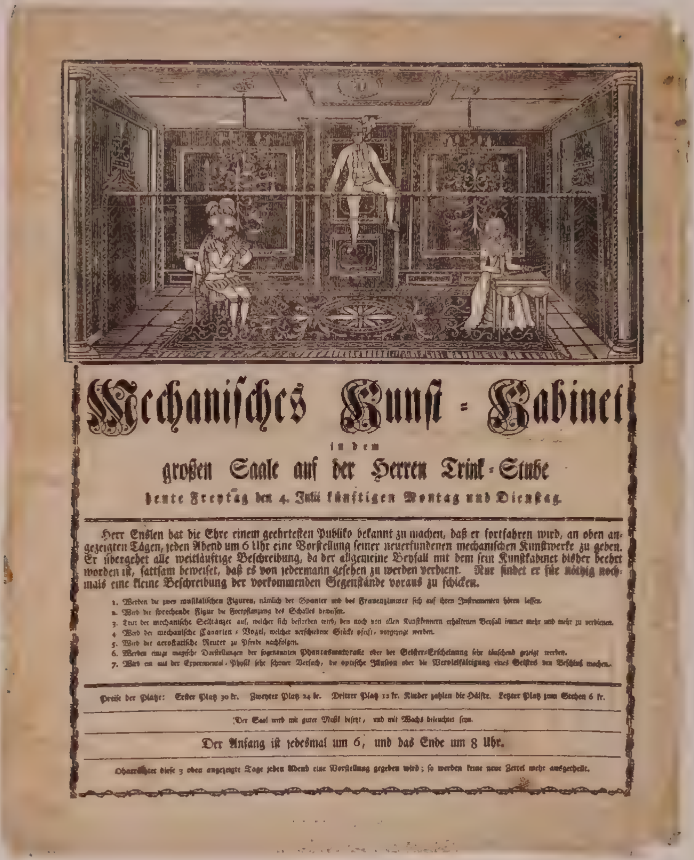
1850s, Parisian magician Jean Eugène Robert-Houdin presented small mechanical figures that mysteriously seemed to respond to requests from spectators. A doll size pastry chef produced cakes and sweets requested by the audience. A half-size mechanical trapeze artist named Antonio Diavolo nodded "yes" or shook his head "no" in response to questions. Twenty years later, John Nevil Maskelyne exhibited his own Prometheus-like skills in London. Psycho, a mysterious miniature mechanical man, could play a game of whist (an early card game similar to bridge) opposite spectators from the audience. Psycho selected the right cards, responded to other players, and invariably won the game (p. 51).

Creating Life, Conquering Death

By the middle of the 19th century, travelers were returning from India with tales of street fakirs—magicians who performed at the side of the road or while seated in a convenient clearing, surrounded by their audiences. The appeal of the fakirs was the simple, vibrant nature of their miracles. They didn't engage in trifles. A mango seed was planted in a mound of earth, and a small enclosure—just a tripod of sticks and some fabric—was erected around it. Within minutes, the seed sprouted. Moments later, it was revealed as a leafy stalk. By the end of the performance, the fakir pulled away the improvised tent to reveal a bushy mango tree, bearing fruit! Truly, these magicians had discovered the secret of life.

A traditional part of the fakir's performance also included a display of power over death. A small boy, often the magician's son, was forced into a small oval basket, just large enough to contain him (p. 54 left). The magician clapped a lid on top, and then plunged a sword through the basket in various directions. The boy screamed in terror, pleaded for mercy, and was finally silenced by the violence. The magician then threw open the basket and boldly stepped inside, stomping and crouching to demonstrate that the boy had disappeared. After a cloth was thrown over the basket, the boy reappeared, stepping out of the basket completely unharmed.

Reports of these spectacles made them sound too compelling to miss. In the spring of 1865, an English conjurer named Colonel Stodare performed at London's Egyptian Hall with Western versions of these East Indian classics. Stodare grew rose bushes from seeds by planting them in pots of earth and covering them with cardboard tubes. Stodare's finale duplicated the Basket Trick, using a long low wicker hamper (p. 54 right). His wife was blindfolded



Mechaniſches Kunſt-Kabinet

in dem

großen Saale auf der Herren Trink-Stube

heute Freytag den 4. Julii künftigen Montag und Dienſtag.

Herr Enslen hat die Ehre einem geehrteſten Publiko bekannt zu machen, daß er fortfahren wird, an oben angezeigten Tägen, jeden Abend um 6 Uhr eine Vorſtellung ſeiner neuerfundenen mechaniſchen Kunſtwerke zu geben. Er übergehet alle weitläuftige Beſchreibung, da der allgemeine Beyfall mit dem ſein Kunſtkabinet bisher beehrt worden iſt, ſattſam beweiſet, daß es von jedermann geſehen zu werden verdient. Nur findet er für nöthig nochmals eine kleine Beſchreibung der vorkommenden Gegenſtände voraus zu ſchicken.

1. Werden die zwey muſikaliſchen Figuren, nämlich der Spanier und das Frauenzimmer ſich auf ihren Inſtrumenten hören laſſen.
2. Wird die ſprechende Figur die Fortpflanzung des Schalles beweiſen.
3. Tritt der mechaniſche Seiltänzer auf, welcher ſich beſtreben wird, den noch von allen Kunſtkennern erhaltenen Beyfall immer mehr und mehr zu verdienen.
4. Wird der mechaniſche Kanarien-Vogel, welcher verſchiedene Stücke pfeift, vorgezeigt werden.
5. Wird der aeroſtatiſche Reuter zu Pferde nachfolgen.
6. Werden einige magiſche Darſtellungen der ſogenannten Phantasmatoraſie oder der Geiſter-Erſcheinung ſehr täuſchend gezeigt werden.
7. Wird ein aus der Experimental-Phyſik ſehr ſchöner Verſuch, die optiſche Illuſion oder die Vervielfältigung eines Geiſtes den Beſchluß machen.

Preiſe der Plätze: Erſter Platz 30 kr. Zweyter Platz 24 kr. Dritter Platz 12 kr. Kinder zahlen die Hälfte. Letzter Platz zum Stehen 6 kr.

Der Saal wird mit guter Muſik beſetzt, und mit Wachs beleuchtet ſeyn.

Der Anfang iſt jedesmal um 6, und das Ende um 8 Uhr.

Ohnerachtet dieſe 3 oben angezeigte Tage jeden Abend eine Vorſtellung gegeben wird; ſo werden keine neue Zettel mehr ausgetheilt.

RIGHT: 1794 Robert-Houdin's creations were part of a long tradition. Exhibitions of automata, the ingenious mechanical figures who played instruments, danced, or performed acrobatic feats, were often prominent features in magic shows of the late 18th and early 19th centuries. In this bill, the German exhibitor Johann Carl Enslen offers mechanical marvels as well as the latest optical illusions.

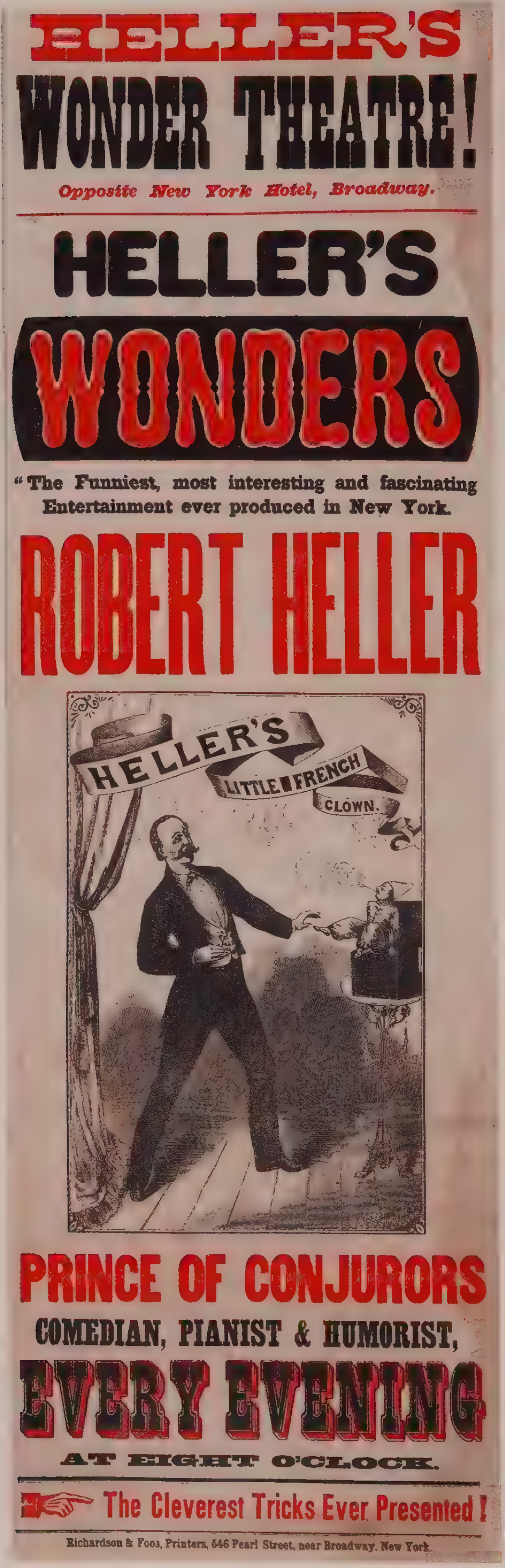
and forced to crouch inside. The basket was pierced by multiple swords. As a special thrill for his sophisticated Victorian audiences, Stodare included a judicious amount of dripping blood, which he casually wiped from the blades of his swords. Madame Stodare disappeared at the moment of greatest peril. Then, improving on the original trick, she reappeared standing in the back of the theater.

The Secret of the Sphinx

But Stodare is best remembered for the Sphinx, a surreal bit of magic that electrified London several weeks after his opening, in April 1865. Holding a small cube-shaped box, about 10 inches across, Stodare solemnly stepped onto the stage. He placed the box on an undraped table—the audience could clearly see beneath the table to the stage curtains behind and perceive that nothing was being concealed. The magician removed the front of the box, revealing a realistic human head dressed in an Egyptian headdress, and then stepped to the far side of the stage. (Stodare was also a ventriloquist, so he wanted to assure his audience that this was no mere demonstration of ventriloquism.) The head opened its eyes, looked around, and then recited a long dramatic poem. Unlike von Kempelen's work, this was clearly no mere automaton but a real live human head that puffed its cheeks, rolled its eyes, and engaged in oratory. Stodare closed the box again, stepped forward, and reopened it, revealing that the mysterious Sphinx head had now been transformed into a pile of ashes.

Thomas Tobin, a clever young London chemist with a taste for optical illusion, had invented the secret of the Sphinx and sold it to Stodare. For more than a century, this magnificent illusion has been played out in many different forms, often featured in circus sideshows—a body without a head, a half lady without legs, a living hand without a body. Once magicians had Tobin's formula, they could not only conquer life and death but actually create their own types of monsters.

Stodare's Sphinx also inspired a number of other innovative decapitation illusions. Magicians of the 1870s produced humorous skits in which an assistant's head was removed, misplaced, and finally returned to his shoulders. By the early 1900s, the illusion was enhanced with a realistic-looking guillotine. History's horrors were effectively tamed by magicians and put onstage to amuse the audience. Even when the magic was comic and farcical, the reminder of life and death was never far behind. Servais Le Roy, an innovative vaudeville magician from the early



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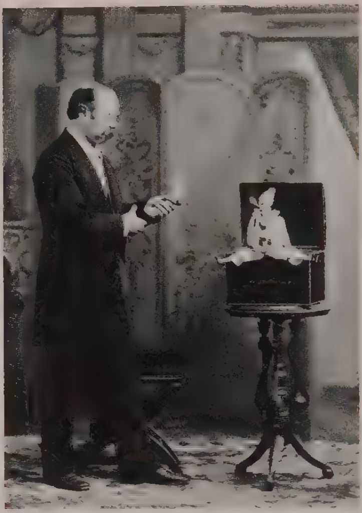
LEFT AND BELOW: **ca. 1877** Robert Heller (William Henry Palmer) was a British-born magician, pianist, mind reader, and humorist who briefly operated his own theater in New York City. In the poster at left, the harlequin in the box is featured as a costar of the show. The unusual photo below shows Heller and the little automaton clown emerging from his wooden chest.



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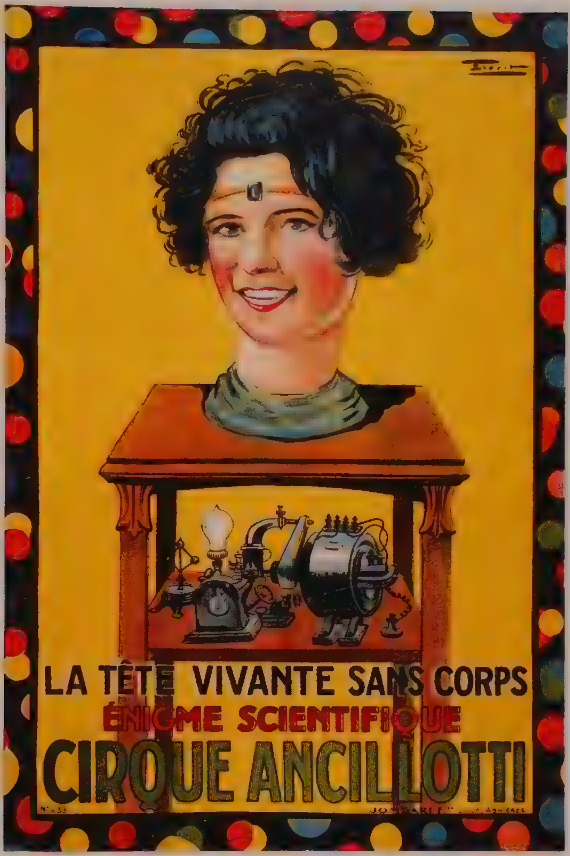
years of the 20th century, used to perform a trick that may sound horrific and grisly, but in his hands it drew gasps and gales of laughter. He showed a live duck and appeared to twist off its head. He placed the body and the head in a container. He repeated this with a live rooster. He then waved a wand, restoring the birds to life. The duck stood up, wearing the rooster's head. The rooster had the duck's head. They waddled around the stage and marched into the wings.

OPPOSITE BOTTOM: **1875** Maskelyne stands to the side of the original Psycho, the famous Victorian thinking machine that inspired debate. The device was too small to contain a person. One commentator guessed that a trained dog was hidden inside, operating the mechanism—although he never explained how a dog played cards.

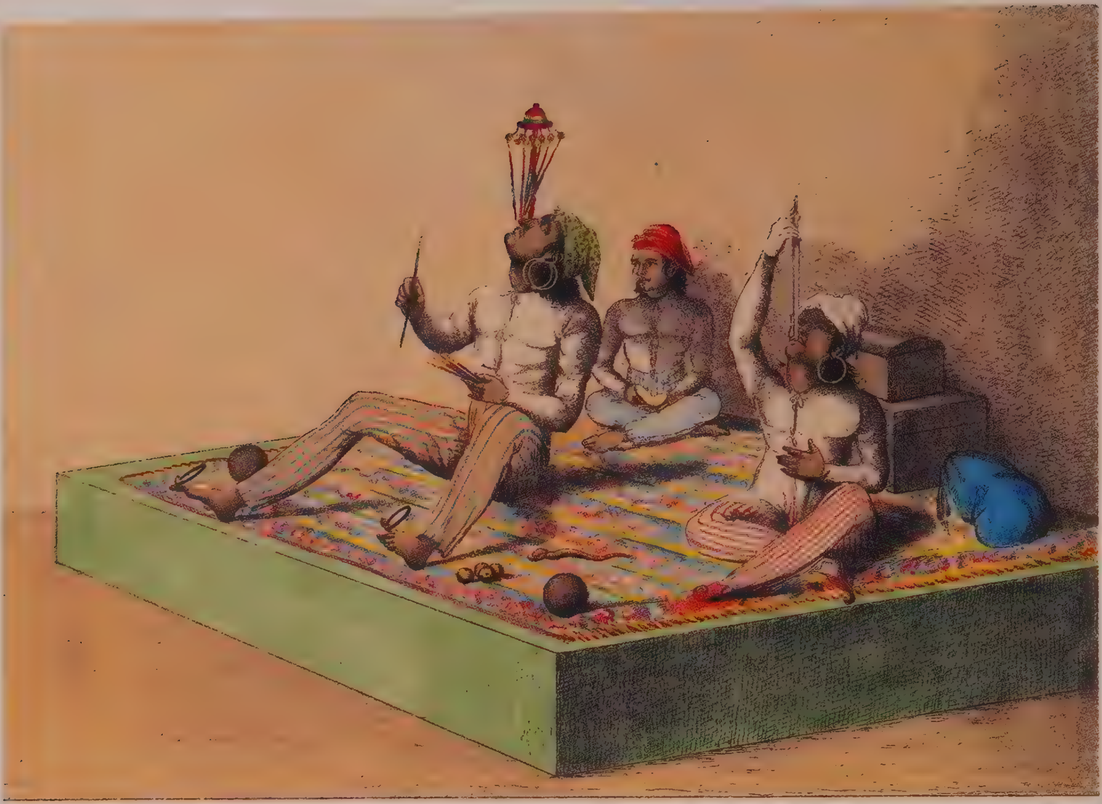
RIGHT: ca. 1920 By the 20th century, with audiences reading of promising scientific discoveries, magicians could adjust their illusions to associate with the latest headlines. Now the living head was surrounded by mechanical apparatus to become a supposed scientific marvel. Once again, the wizard was ahead of his time.

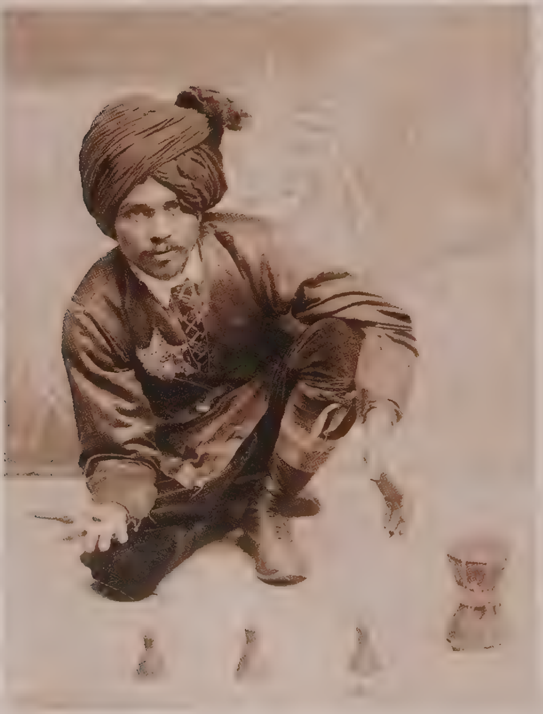


A Mythic Portrayal of the Soul

Le Roy created the most memorable, most beautiful illusion to mythologize life and death. In the famous illusion he called Rostrum, or Asrah, first performed in 1901, a woman assistant was lifted onto a long table, where she stretched out on her back, immobile (pp. 64–65). Le Roy covered her with a white silk sheet, obscuring her from head to toe. Slowly, the covered form rose into the air. Le Roy passed a hoop over the floating lady, providing a puzzling bit of magic. As the music built to a crescendo, he reached up and pulled off the cloth. The lady seemed to melt away in midair. As the cloth fell, there was nothing there. Magicians debate whether Le Roy's illusion should be considered a levitation or a disappearance. But the answer is that he achieved something unique with the combination—a visual elegy turned into a vaudeville act; a beautiful, mythic portrayal of the soul.

Perhaps this is the time to discuss a few technical terms. While not actual magic words, these words are part of the language of magicians. *Sleight-of-hand* refers to skillful magic performed with small ordinary objects and accomplished purely by the deftness of the performer's hands. *Illusion*—while it might seem to imply an *optical* illusion—is a technical term for larger, stage-filling tricks

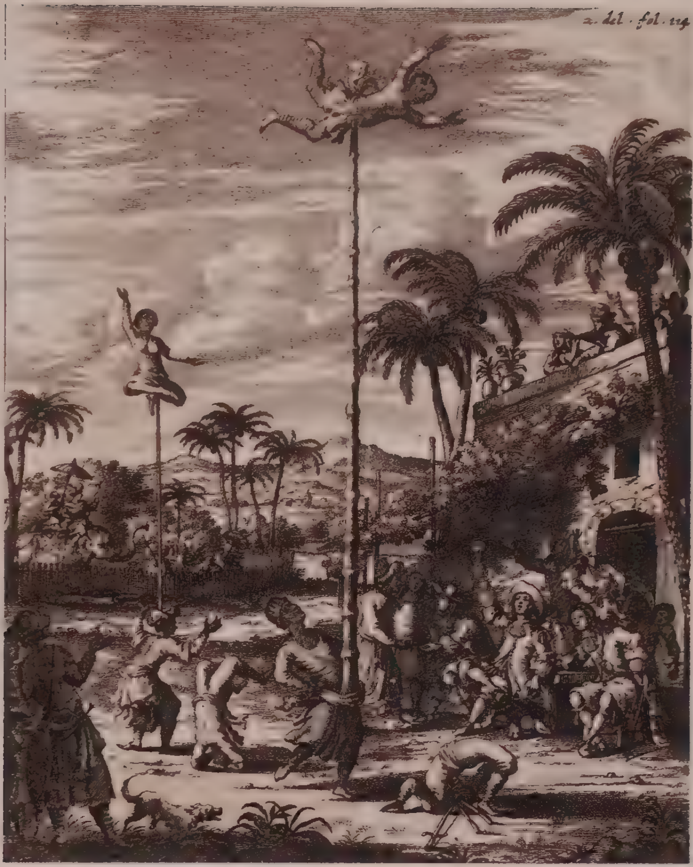




ABOVE: **1813** At the start of the 19th century, the first groups of Indian jugglers and fakirs arrived in London. In addition to spinning tops and juggling balls, they performed the Indian Cups and Balls Trick and sword-swallowing. In India, they performed seated on the ground in open markets; in London, they sat cross-legged on the stage, captivating their audiences.

LEFT: **ca. 1910** The Indian Cups and Balls Trick was performed with small wooden cups with handles so they could be lifted from above. The performer crouches over the cups. The balls disappear from the performer's hand and appear beneath the cups. In a flash, the balls transpose, multiply, and change color.

RIGHT: **ca. 1676** The famous Indian Rope Trick, in which a rope was thrown into the air and a boy climbed to the top, was never more than a legend. This German engraving portrays Indian pole balancing, which may have later been mistaken for the Indian Rope Trick. In the 1860s, novelist Charles Dickens saw one of these jugglers "holding a staff in his waistband and letting a brother juggler swarm up it and lay himself all abroad on the top."

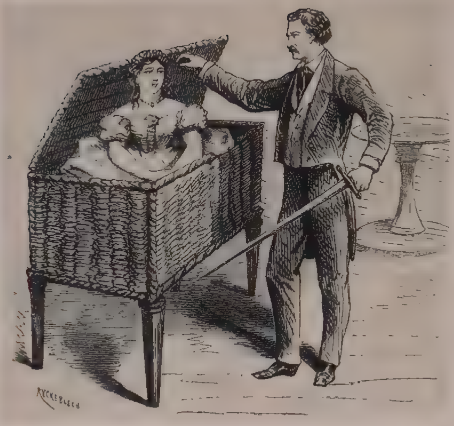


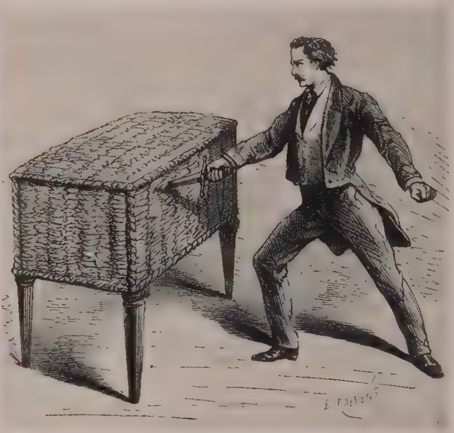
performed with animals or people, like Le Roy's wonderful Rostrum.

In his 1931 autobiography, the brilliant British magician David Devant looked back on his career and wrote that there were only seven possible accomplishments in a magic show. This short list described the notes on a keyboard, which have been played and rearranged by the great magicians throughout history. Later authors amended the list to six, or enlarged it to 17 or 19 essential effects, which can be quickly summarized: Something can appear or disappear. It might be a playing card, as in Howard Thurston's sleight-of-hand act, or a person, as in Buatier de Kolta's famous Vanishing Lady illusion. An object can transform from one thing into another. It can transpose from one place to another. It can be destroyed and restored, be rendered immune from injury, or be magically penetrated, without harm, by another object. For example, a victim is decapitated in a guillotine—an apparent murder—but emerges with his head intact. An object can float in the air without support, or become mysteriously animated, as if endowed with life; this was the essence of von Kempelen's Chess Player and Stodare's Sphinx. Finally, a performer can exhibit the skills of mental acuity, able to foretell the future or apparently read someone's mind.

Despite being a secretive art, some of the magician's technical jargon has entered our language. *Gimmick* was originally a show-business term for a secret device used to accomplish a trick. *Patter* seems to have been borrowed by magicians, and then returned to the dictionary. Originally, it was an archaic word for *mumbled phrases* (from "Pater Noster," or the Lord's Prayer); magicians adopted it to describe their mannered palaver that accompanies a trick. *Prestidigitation* was a deliberately fancy word coined in 1815 by French magician Jules de Rovère. It was supposed to imply the quickness of the fingers, suggesting the famous misconception "The hand is quicker than the eye." In fact, magic is not accomplished through speed, and every magician knows that the hand is certainly not quicker than a watchful spectator. Similarly, only a few, old-fashioned tricks were ever accomplished with *smoke and mirrors*, but the phrase has survived as an analogy for trickery.

Only a few magicians ever pulled a rabbit from a hat (the trick enjoyed a brief period of fashion when top hats could be borrowed), but today almost every magician is pictured performing this cliché. Similarly, very few magicians ever matched the popular cartoon portrait—tall and angular, with a menacing smile and a satanic beard.





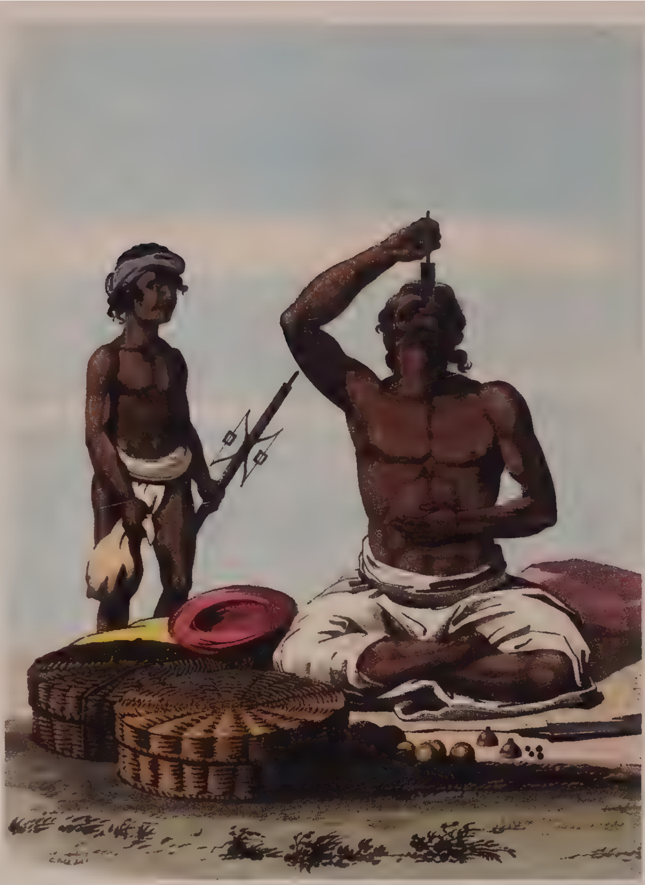
Alexander Herrmann, a French-born magician of the late 1800s, inspired the image, but history demonstrates that most popular magicians have appeared friendly, congenial, and ordinary—the better to deceive us. The Indian Rope Trick—the rope that supposedly rises in the air, after which a boy climbs it to the top—may never have been performed in India (p. 53). It was at first a myth to glamorize Oriental magic, and then was only re-created in 20th-century Western renditions, using elaborate stage effects. Sawing a Lady in Half, which we might imagine as a longtime favorite, only became popular in 1921, during the heyday of vaudeville. Unfortunately, magic seems to confine the ladies to this subservient role—sliced, squeezed, or smiling at the side of the stage. Although woman magicians had neither less charm nor less skill than their male counterparts, only a small number of women have ever starred in their own magic acts. That's a shame, as the role seems ideal. Women were traditionally associated with ancient magic as witches, priestesses, or oracles. But when magic became amusing—a mere entertainment—magicians became men.

Finally, there has always been a general assessment of magicians as dishonest—that their art consists of lies and swindles. But actually, magicians seldom indulge in bold deceptions. The art lies in subtle suggestions and skillful reassurances that push the audience to its own mistaken conclusions. The greatest deceptions are created in the minds of the audience, and the audience is always an unwitting—perhaps unwilling—partner in creating these illusions. The genius of Le Roy's wonderful levitation is that it made a connection with the audience on a mythic level. Similarly, von Kempelen's Chess Player fascinated his audience not because it was impossible, but because it was *almost* possible—it seemed a wonderful fantasy for audiences who had marveled at windup clockwork devices and contemplated the intricacies of the human mind. Two centuries later, man-made computers finally achieved von Kempelen's fantasy, and were able to defeat the most skillful human opponent.

Poor von Kempelen. Trained as a scientist to honor the truth, he accidentally stumbled into the world of deception and was forever bewildered with the success of his "mere trifle." He may have tried to forget his fraudulent machine, but history remembers it as his greatest achievement. Magicians have always known that there is a particular honor in deception. Throughout recorded history, mankind has been vexed by everyday deceptions and attracted to incredible deceptions. The magician

OPPOSITE LEFT: **ca. 1890** The Indian Basket Trick was a symbolic execution and rebirth. An assistant was entangled in netting and forced into a tiny wicker basket, just large enough to contain him. Then swords were thrust through the basket, and apparently through the assistant. At the climax, the assistant was restored, completely unharmed.

OPPOSITE RIGHT: **ca. 1864** Colonel Stodare, a popular British magician, was one of the first to westernize the Indian feats, capturing their dramatic power of life and death for European audiences. In his basket illusion, he apparently impaled a demure woman. She screamed, and blood dripped from the basket.



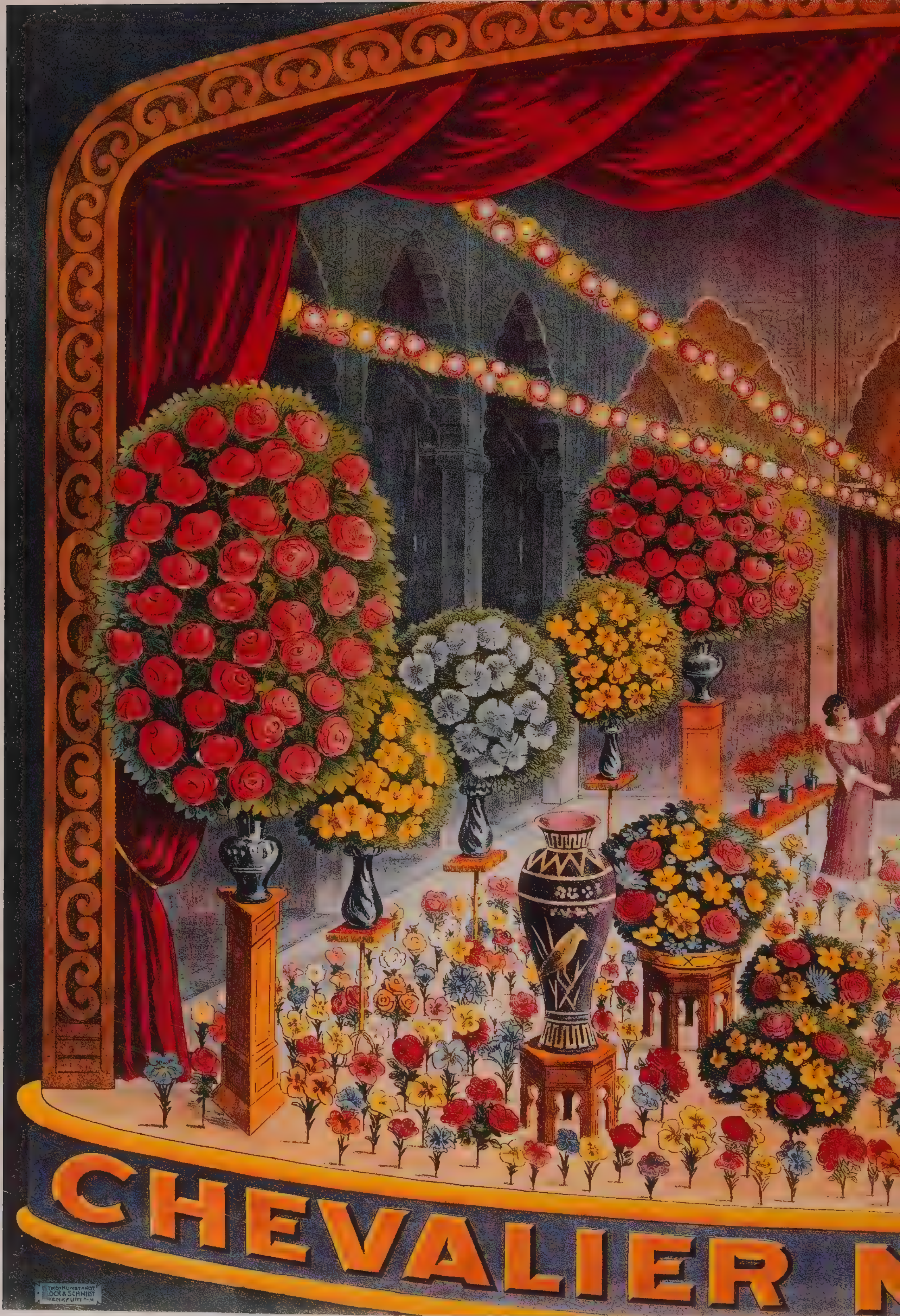
RIGHT: **1801** This British engraving portrays an Indian fakir during his performance of sword-swallowing. On the ground at his feet are the props for the Indian Cups and Balls, a sleight-of-hand effect. The vibrant, visceral mysteries of the fakirs were recounted as genuine marvels by travelers returning from India.

merely visualizes the "once upon a time" fantasy that begins every work of fiction, and then weaves his story with actions.

Visualizing the Unimaginable

In this way, the task of the magician has always been consistent: demonstrating the impossible, intriguing the audience by pushing open a door at the brink of reality, and teasing them—through showmanship, skill, and sheer, unabashed deception—about what might lie beyond. It's a formula that's been co-opted by much of modern entertainment: enchant with a simple, resonant story but conceal the strings, wires, and trap doors that are used to tell it. If audiences today seldom see a magic show, it's not that magic has disappeared, but that it has permeated our culture. Cinema, television, and video games have purloined the classic magician's box of tricks.

In his comments on the Chess Player, Windisch had it just right. It is possible that a skillful illusion teases, intrigues, and "does honor to the human mind." Maybe, over a long history, magicians have achieved even more than that, by hinting at intangibles and visualizing the unimaginable. As Pablo Picasso once explained it, "Art is a lie that makes us realize the truth."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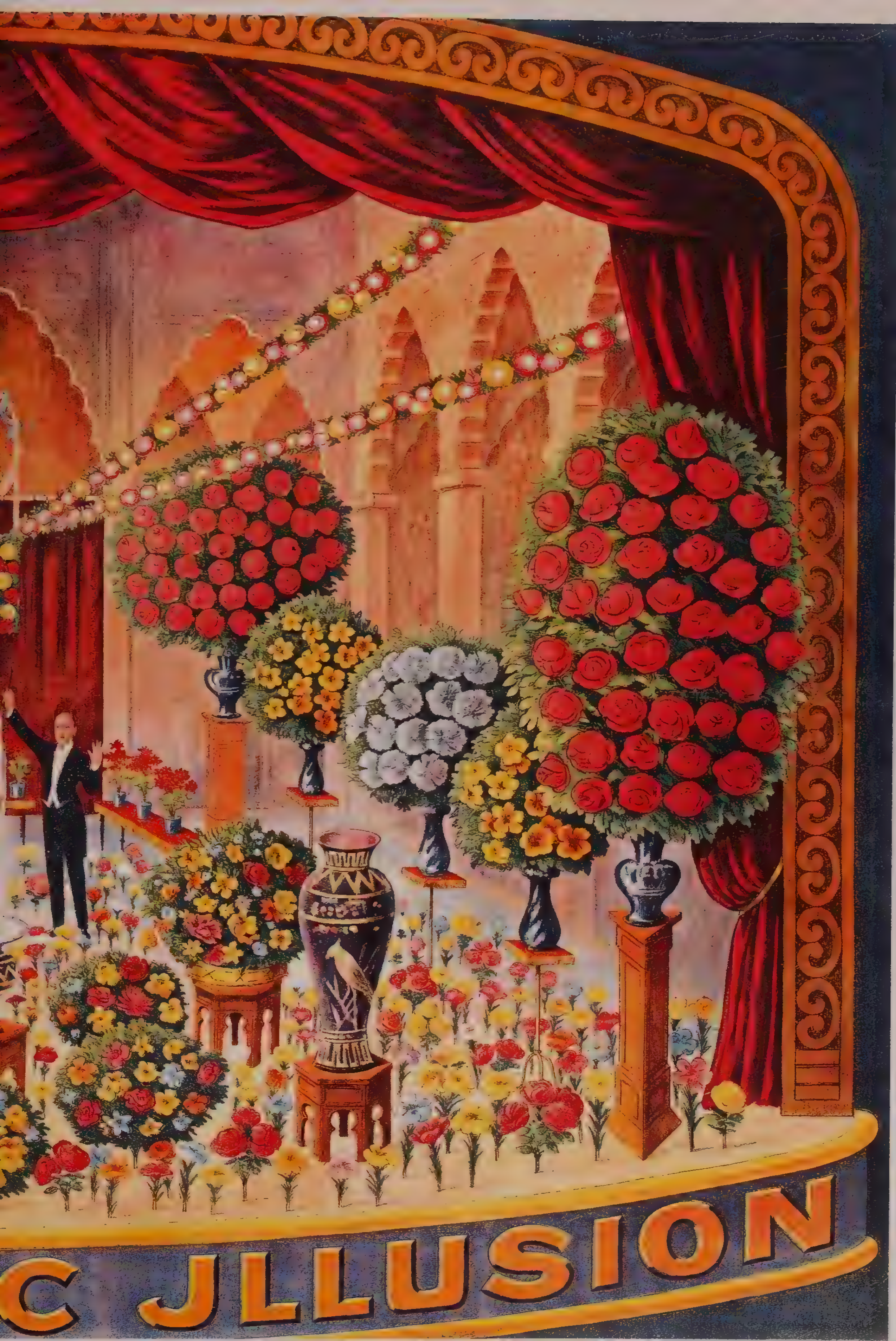
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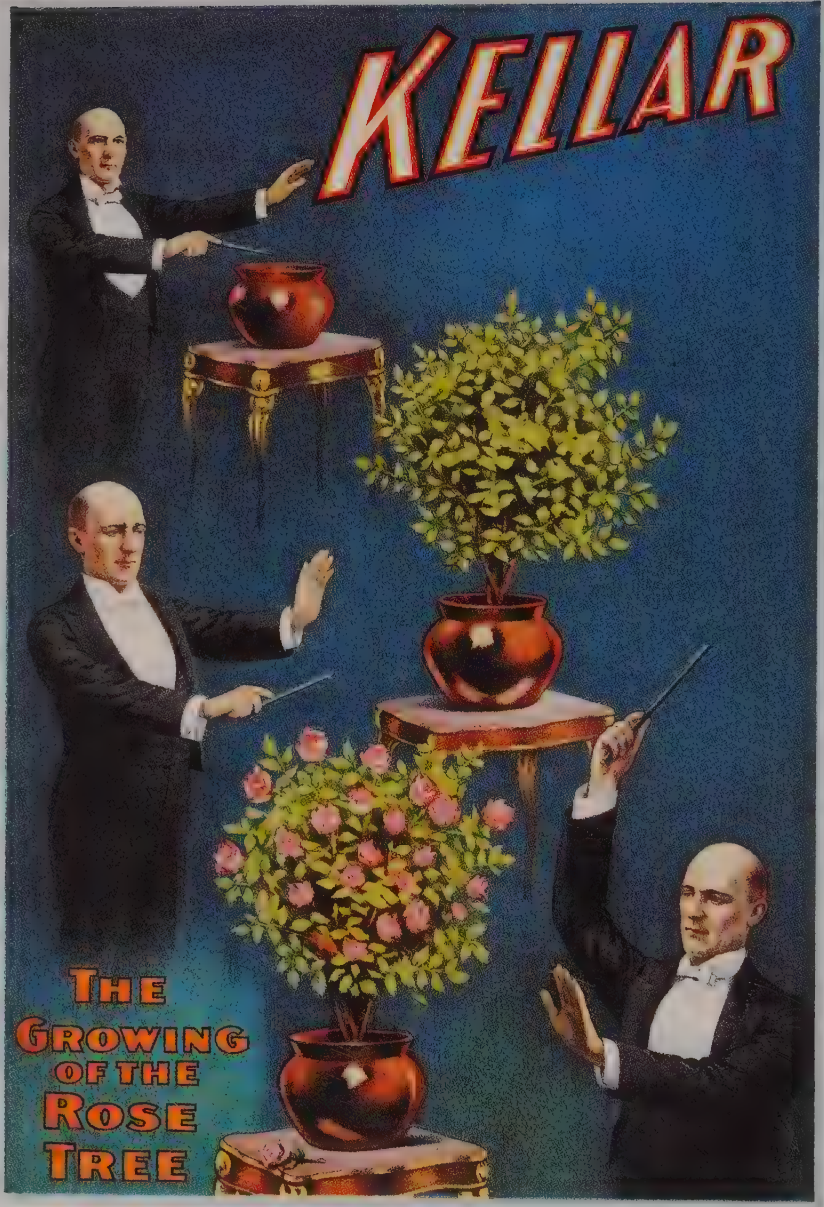
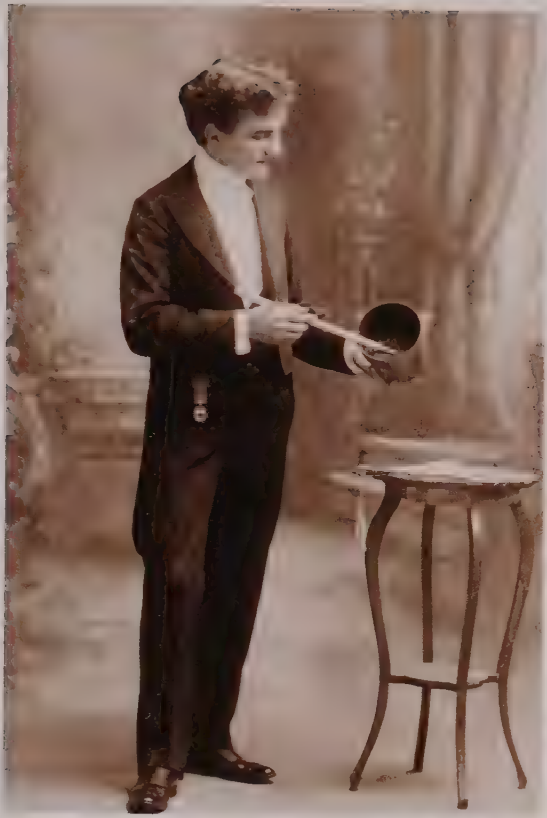
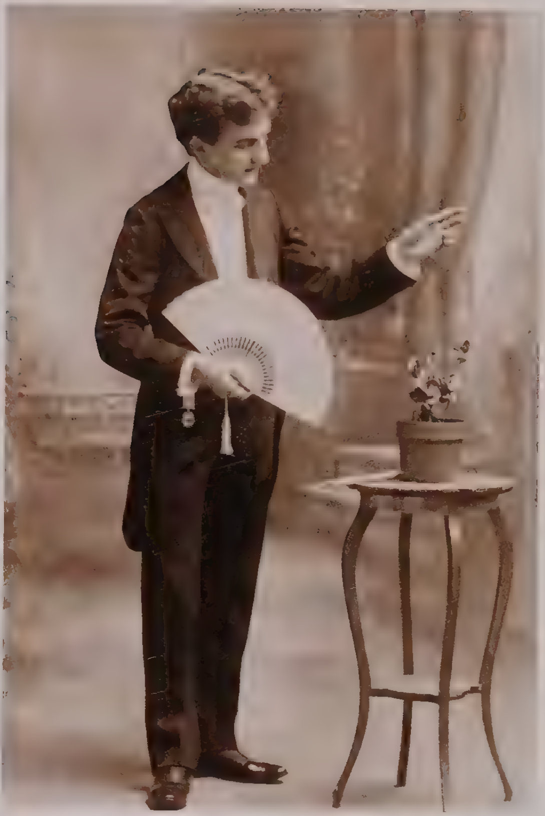

KELLAR
THE GROWING OF THE ROSE TREE

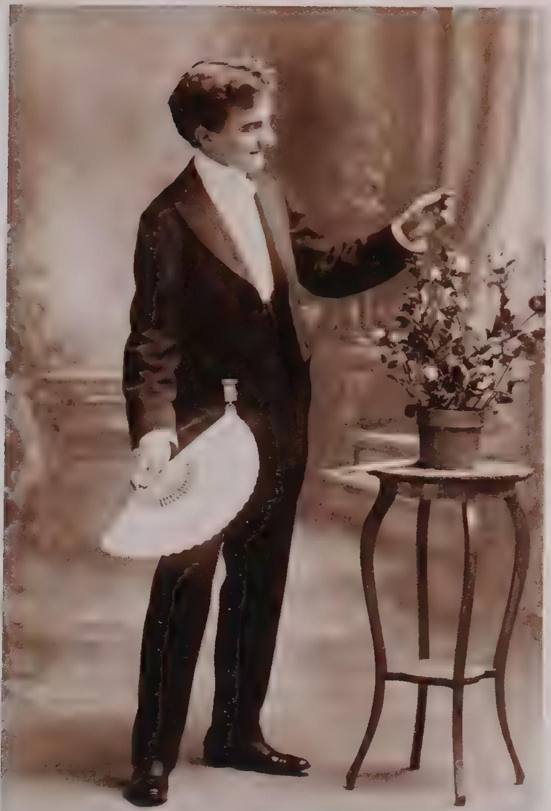
PAGES 56–57: **ca. 1924** Chevalier Nic was a Danish magician who turned the flower trick into a stage-filling spectacle. Now the flowers were made from brightly dyed feathers. Bouquets were produced from empty tubes. Individual flowers, attached to weighted darts, were tossed into the air and fell upright onto the wooden stage.

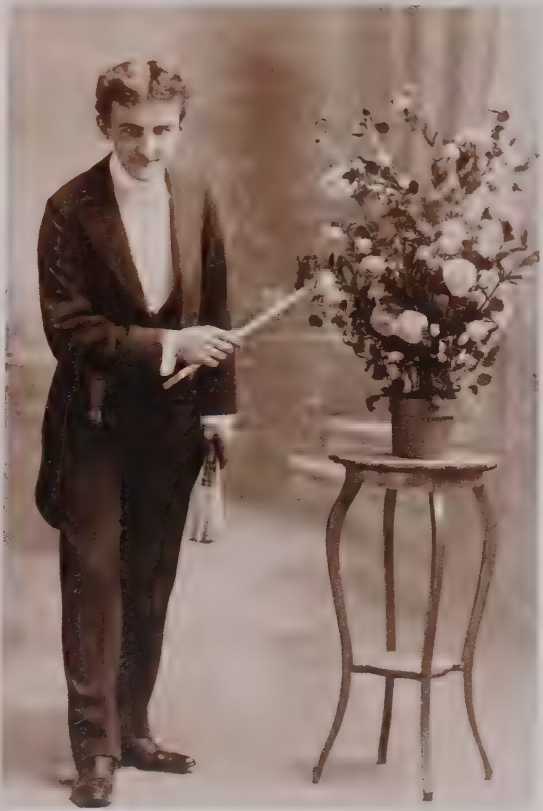
ABOVE: **1895** Harry Kellar, America's favorite magician at the end of the 19th century, delighted his audiences with the elegant growing of rose trees. He planted a small sprout in a pot of earth, and covered it with a paper cone. Within minutes, the sprout had grown and flowered.

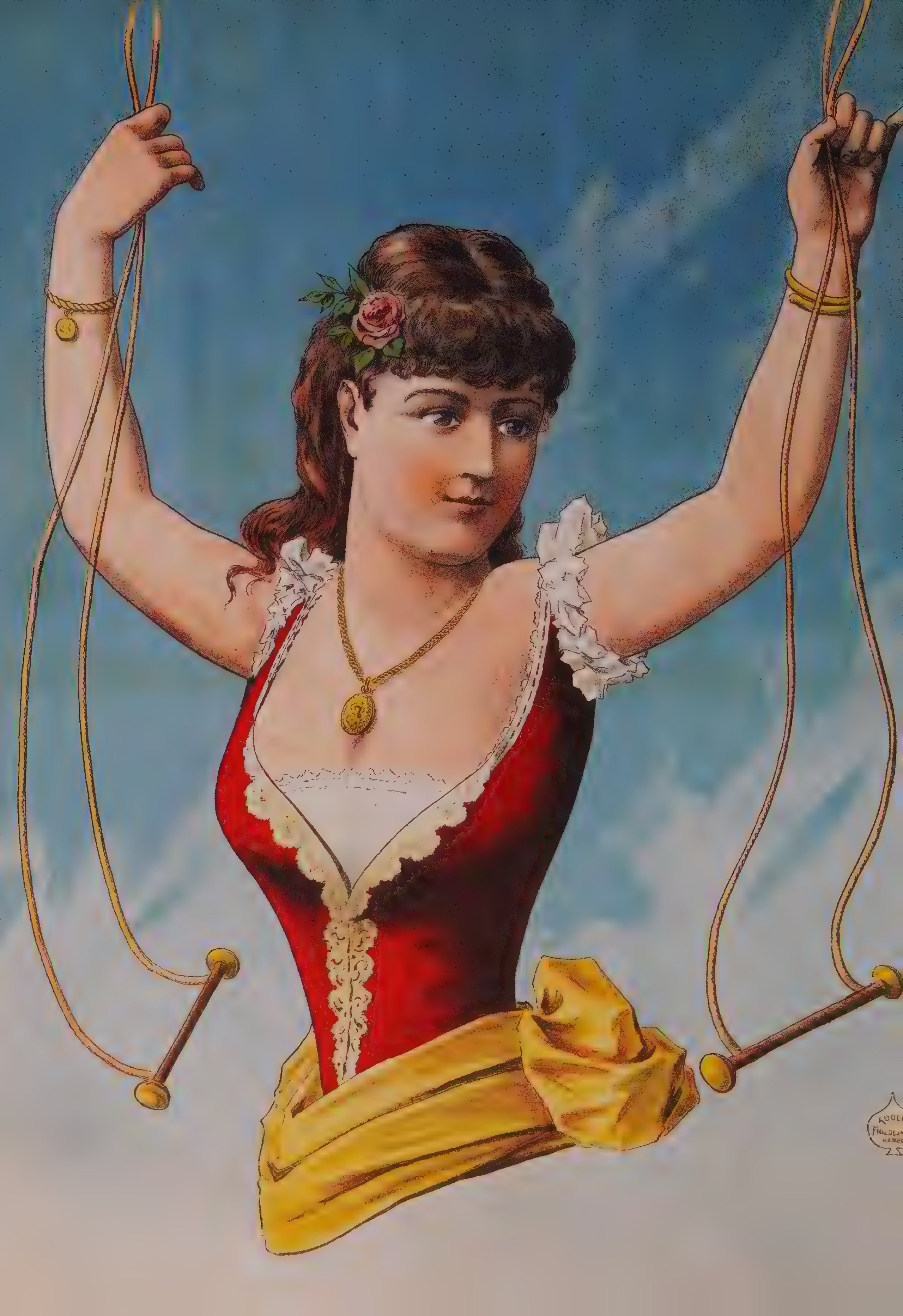
OPPOSITE: **ca. 1905** Karl Germain, the American magician, introduced his unique flower trick as a genuine Hindu miracle. He told his audience, "The mango is ... not so pretty, [so] I have provided a sprig of a rose tree." Germain's rose bush slowly grew—branches spreading, flowers blooming—as the audience watched in awe.







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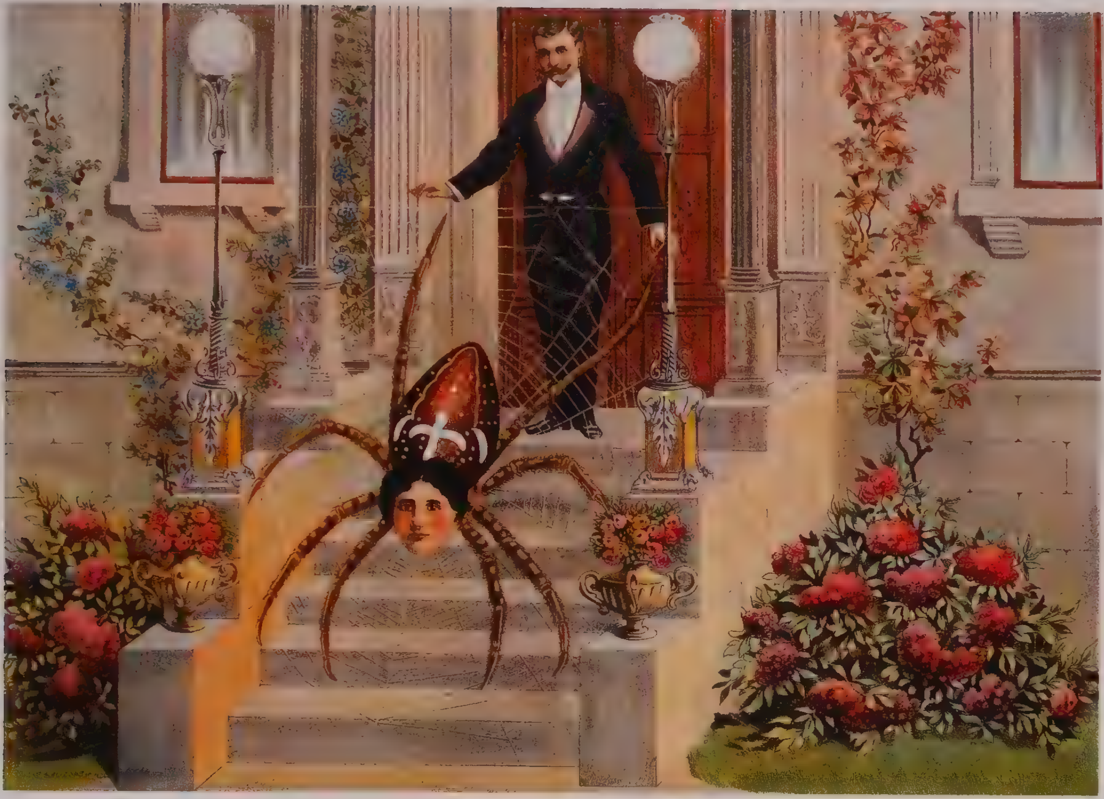
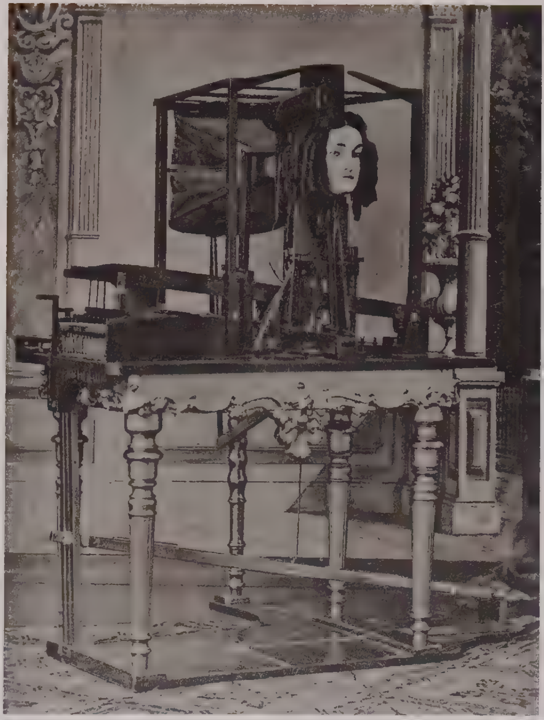
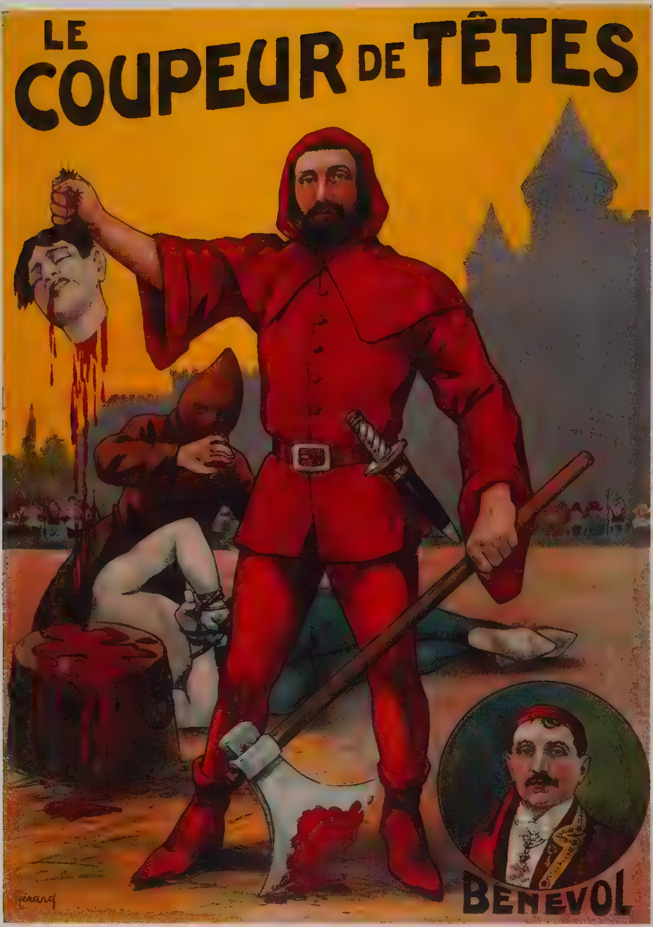




ABOVE: **ca. 1899** The Spider and the Fly was an eerie sideshow illusion, a gigantic spider in a web with a real human face. The magician could now use his powers to combine images of horror and beauty, creating a new sort of supernatural monster.

OPPOSITE: **1892** The modern magician could create freaks of nature, challenging our understanding of life and death. Thauma was the name given to an innovative sideshow optical illusion. She appeared to be a living half woman, suspended on a swing. Like a mythic creature, Thauma was both beautiful and horrific at the same moment.

RIGHT: **ca. 1860** Machines that could speak or reason were long seen as the ultimate achievements of science. Wolfgang von Kempelen created a genuine speaking machine in 1778, after he invented the chess automaton. Joseph Faber, a Viennese inventor, developed another genuine talking machine, his Euphonia, by the 1830s. Pictured here in this photograph by Mathew Brady, Faber's Euphonia was a collection of valves and bellows. It could be operated to create the sound of a realistic human voice.

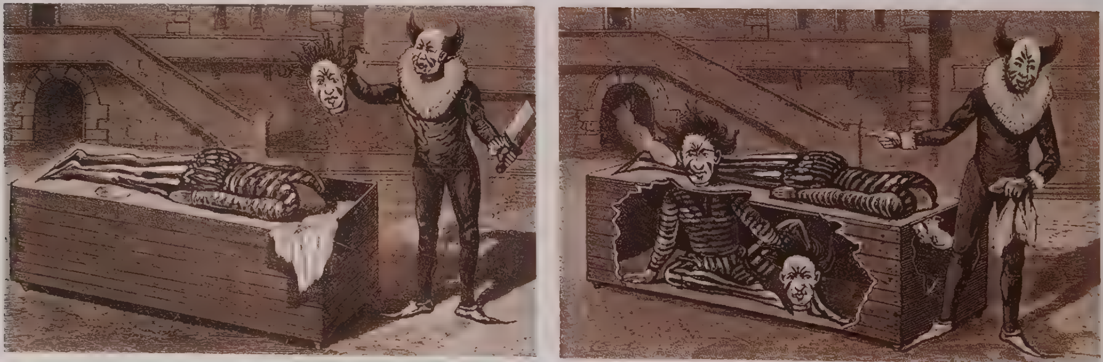


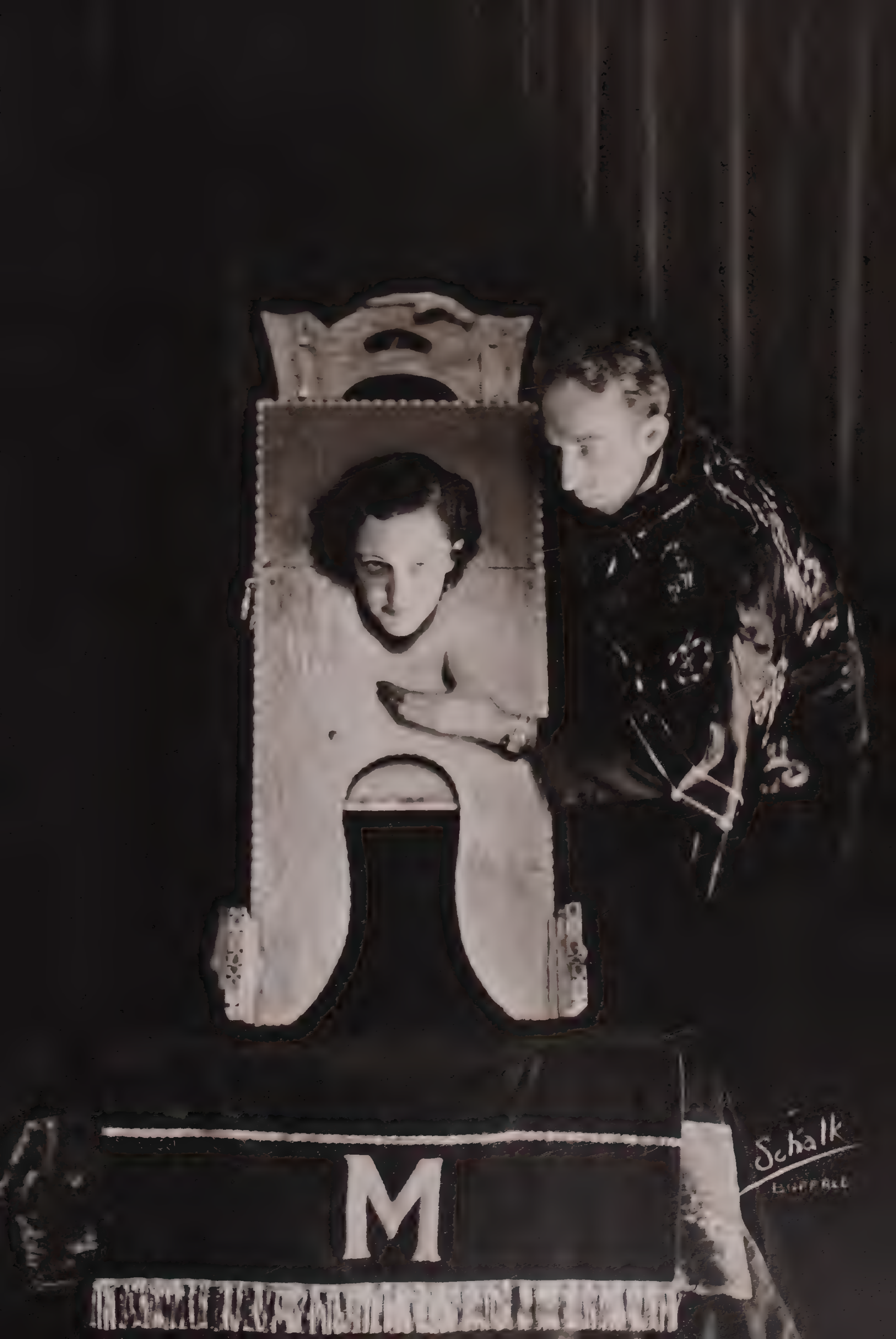
LEFT: **ca. 1925** Benevol's evocative poster adds a level of gore that the audience would never have seen. Born Francesco Benevolo in Italy, he achieved success in France, and featured the decapitation illusion. The magician could conquer life and death by chopping off a head and then restoring it.

OPPOSITE: **ca. 1938** Mark Barker, a Buffalo, New York, magician, worked under the name of Moxo. Instead of duplicating the tall, horrific French guillotine of history, many magicians preferred to use a compact model, in which a blade was apparently pushed through the neck of the victim. The smaller prop was more practical for a traveling showman.

PAGES 64–65: **1920** Le Roy's greatest achievement may have been his Asrah levitation—which he sometimes billed as Rostrum. A woman floated in the air, then disappeared suddenly as she was floating. It was a poetic analogy for death and the soul. This evocative poster captures the mystical qualities, although it exaggerates the effect. In reality, the illusion took place over the stage, not over the audience.

BELOW: **1897** An engraving from Albert Hopkins's textbook of magic secrets, *Magic*, shows the traditional method for slicing off a head. A trick table, two actors, and an artificial head were switched under cover of the action. The trick was originally described in the first published English book on magic, Reginald Scot's *The Discoverie of Witchcraft*, from 1584.

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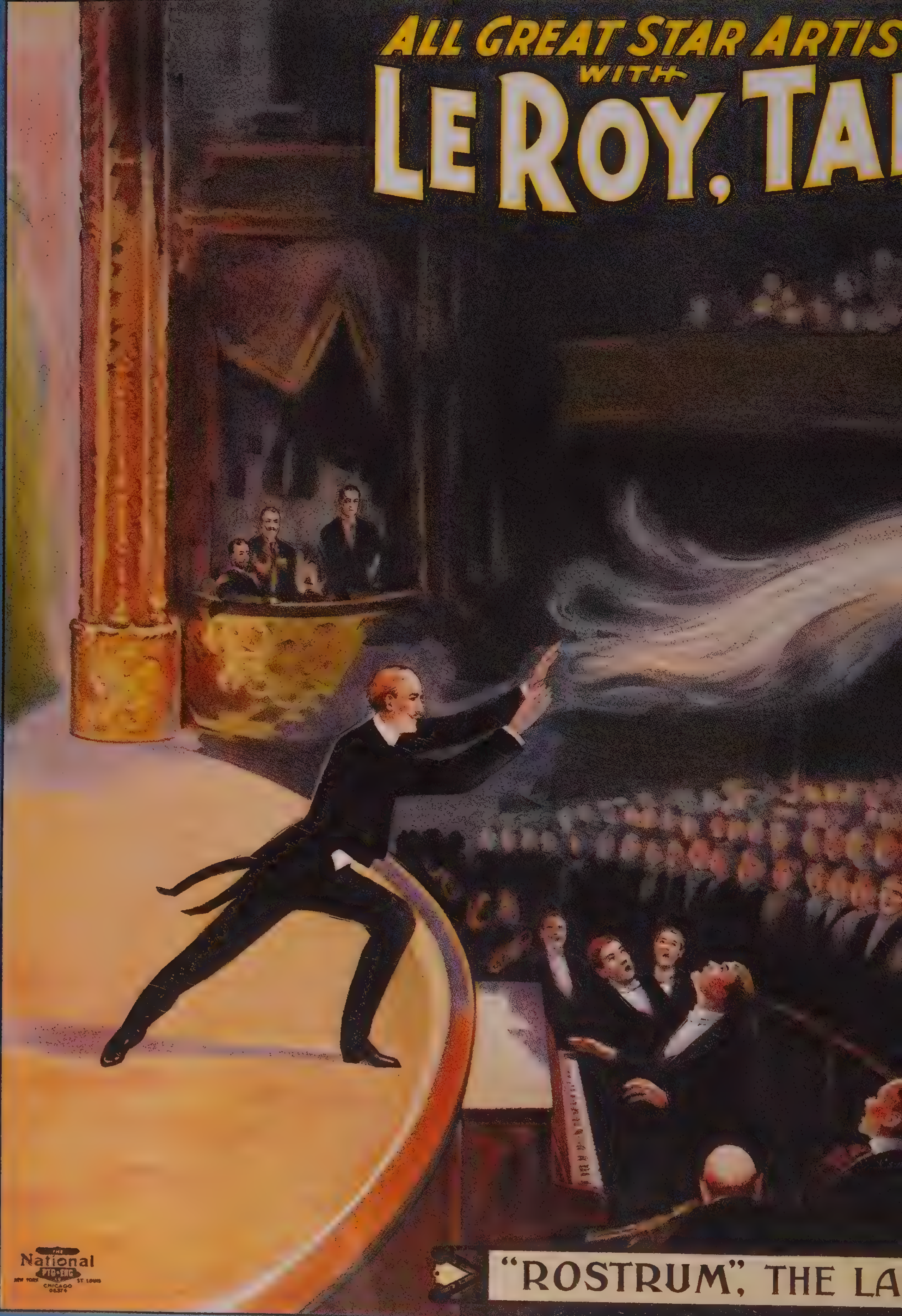
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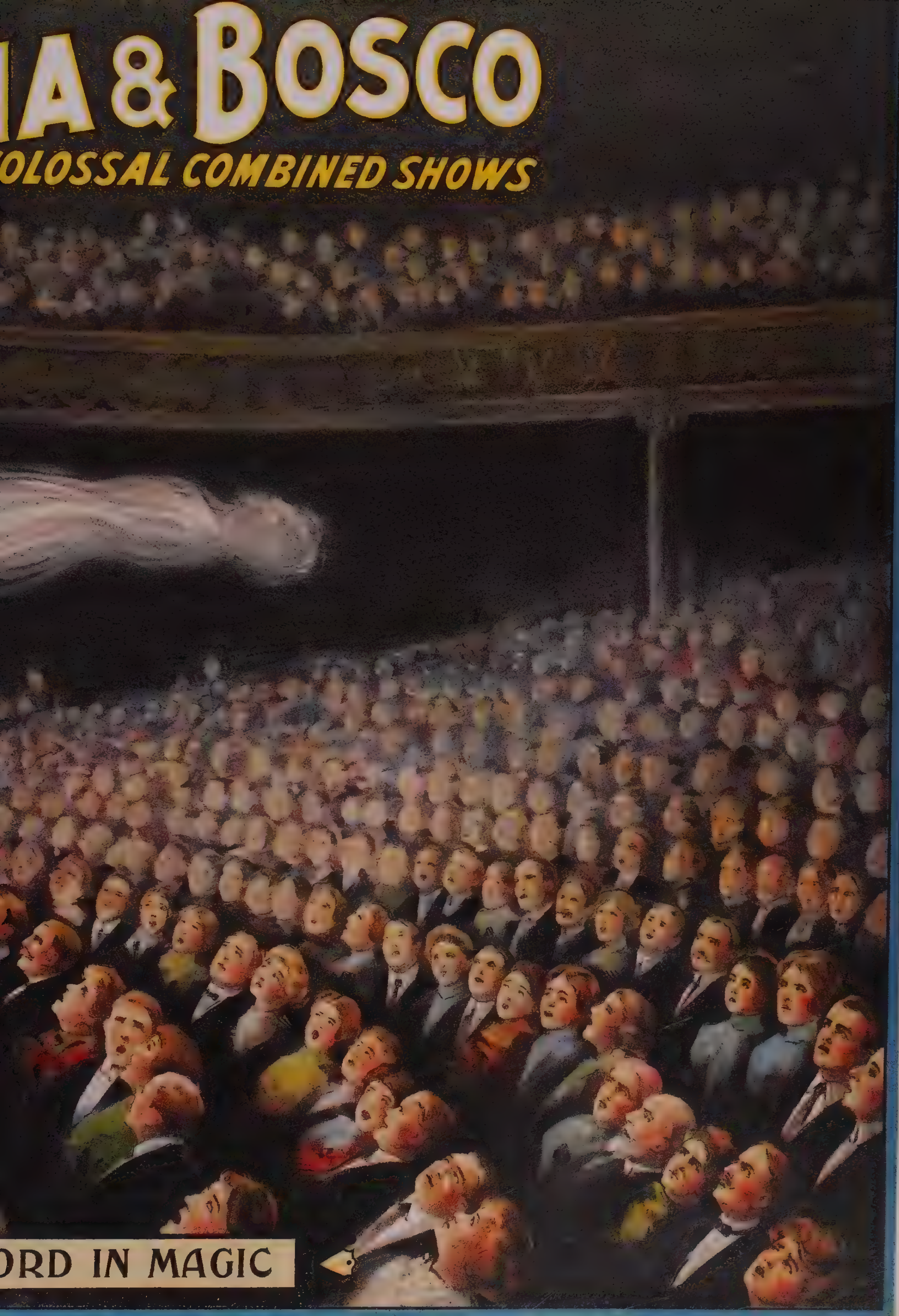
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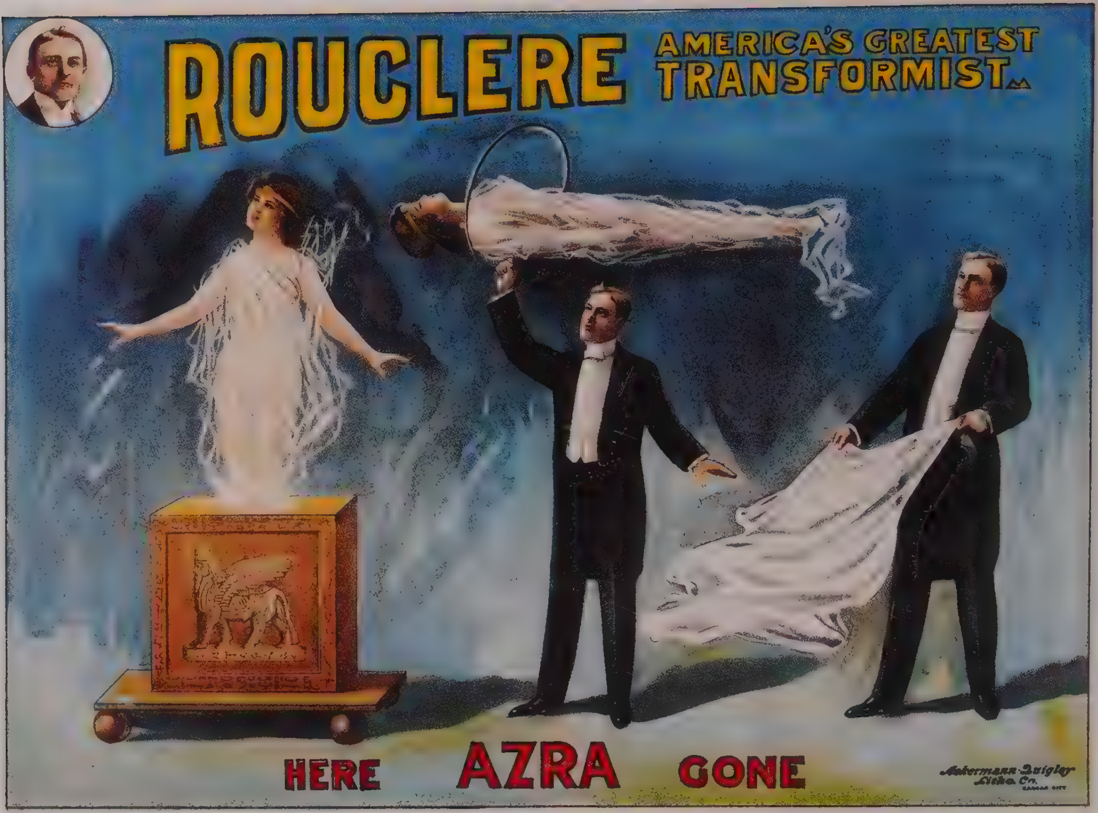
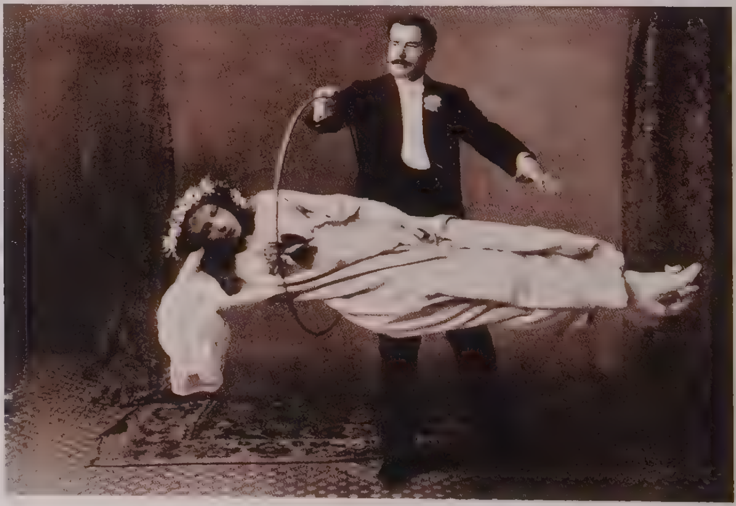
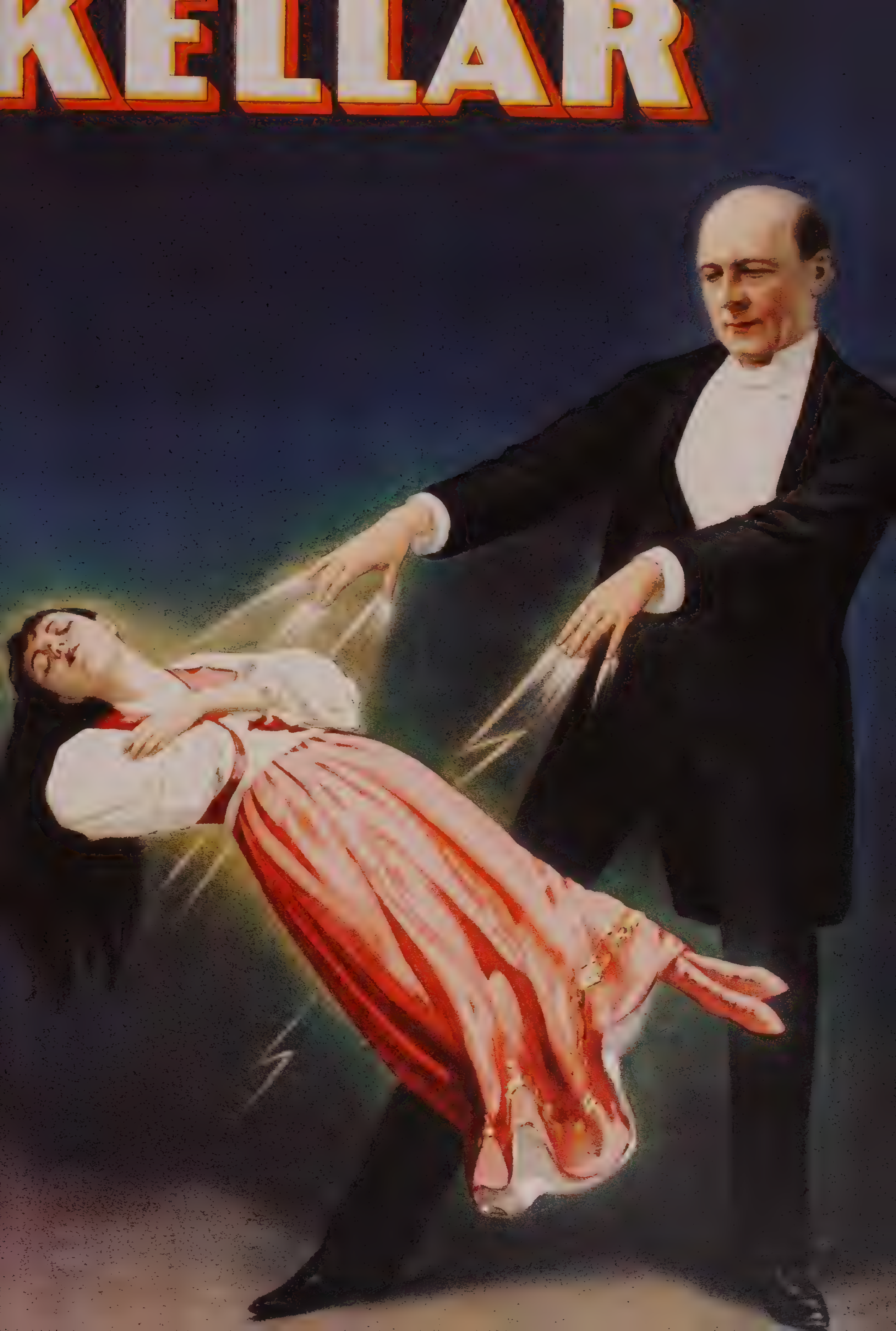


ABOVE: **ca. 1903** Harry and Mildred Rouclere, the American vaudeville magicians, performed Servais Le Roy's Asrah levitation (on this poster, with a different spelling). The three steps of their illusion tell a distinctive story. Here—and the woman is produced onstage. She floats in the air, and then disappears—gone!

OPPOSITE: **1894** Harry Kellar made a specialty of the levitation illusion, which he improved and evolved throughout his career. His last version, titled the Levitation of Princess Karnac, was a mechanical and artistic masterpiece. The woman floated in the center of a brightly lighted stage, isolated from any scenery.



RIGHT: **1902** David Devant, born David Wighton, was an artistic and innovative British magician who became the partner of John Nevil Maskelyne. His levitation illusion was titled the Sylph, although by modern standards the woman's starched Edwardian costume doesn't appear sylph-like. This levitation was one of the first in which a solid hoop was passed over the floating woman.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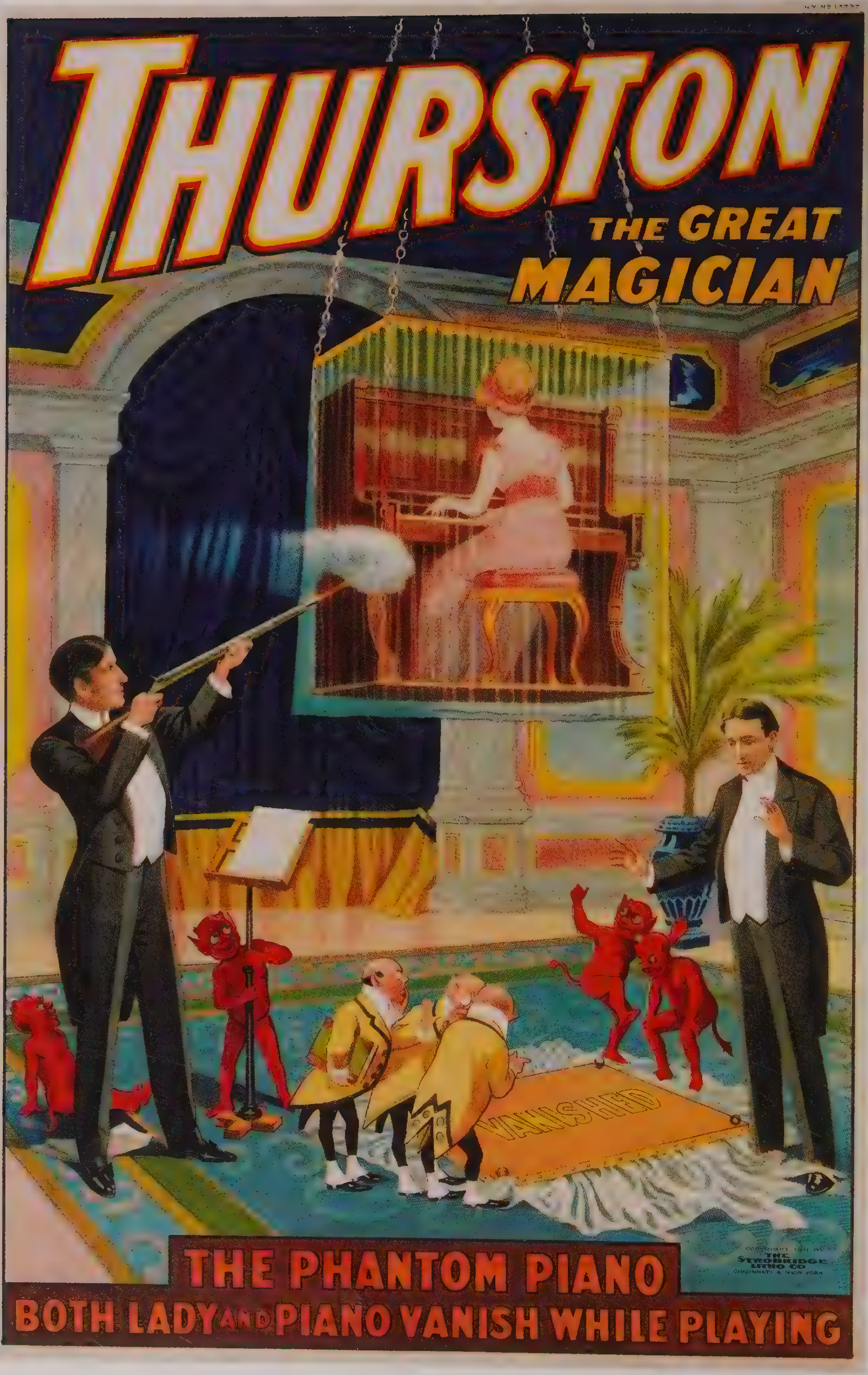
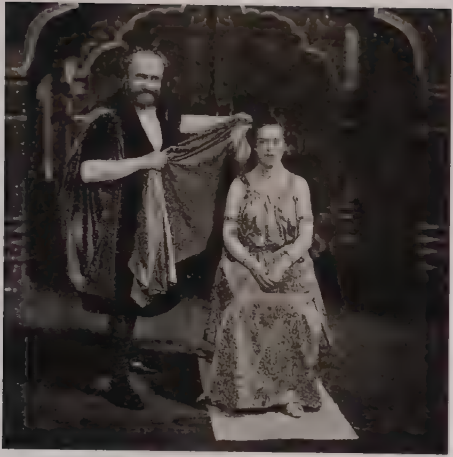
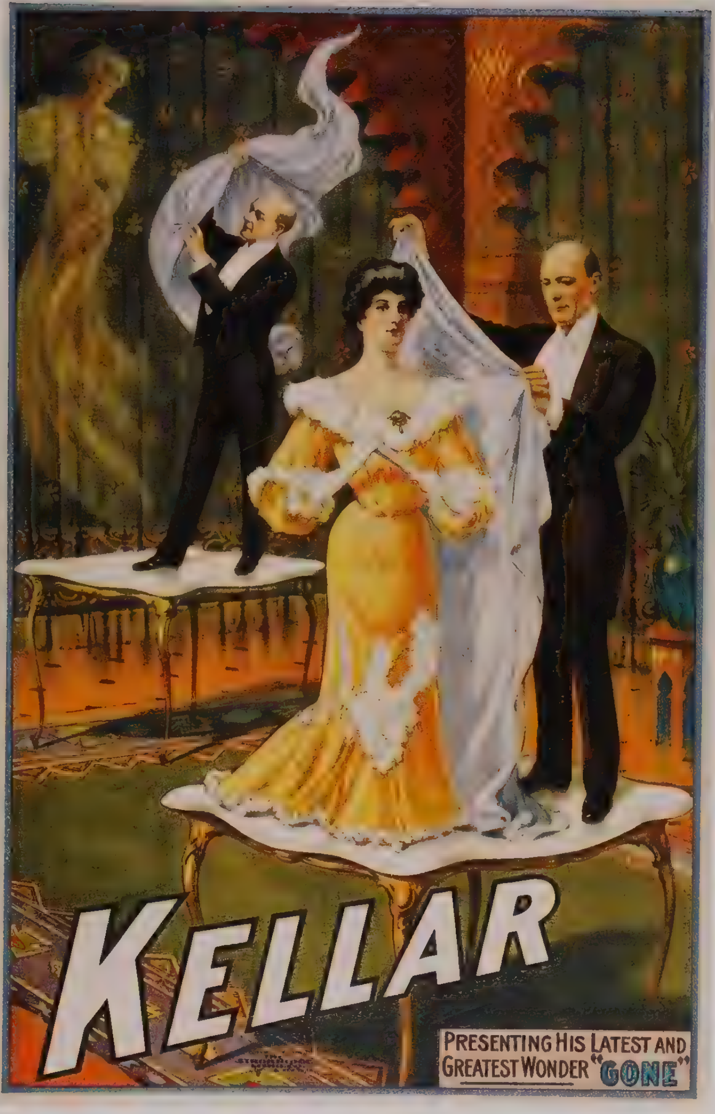

THURSTON
THE GREAT MAGICIAN
VANISHED
THE PHANTOM PIANO
BOTH LADY AND PIANO VANISH WHILE PLAYING
COPYRIGHT 1911 BY
THE STROBRIDGE LITHO CO
CINCINNATI & NEW YORK

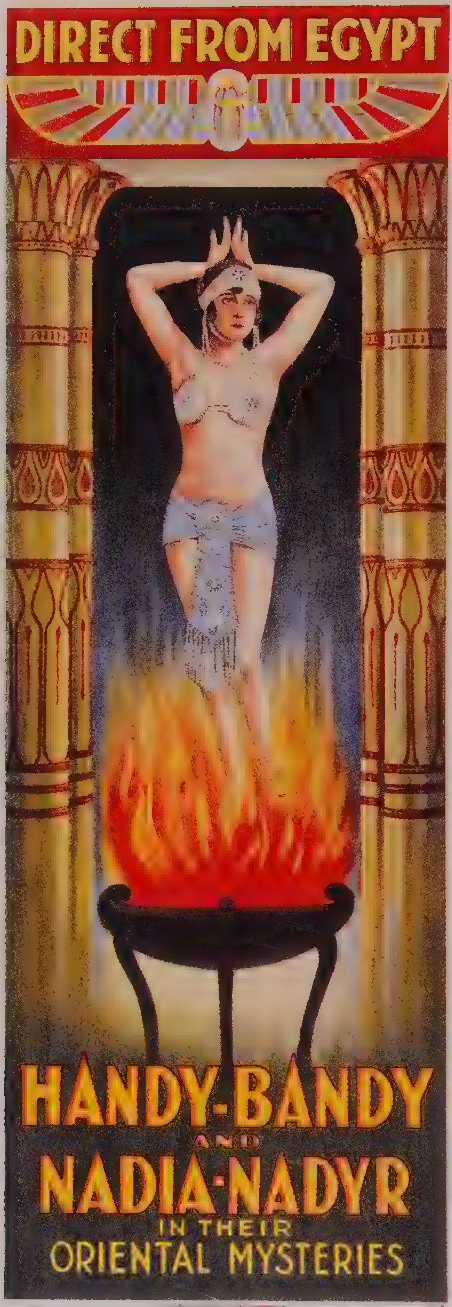


LEFT: **ca. 1902** The French magician Buatier de Kolta originated the Vanishing Lady illusion in 1886. A sheet of newspaper was spread on the stage floor, and a small wooden chair was placed atop the paper. De Kolta's wife, Alice, sat on the chair, and was covered with a silken cloth. The cloth and the woman instantly disappeared.

OPPOSITE: **1911** Howard Thurston, America's most popular magician in the early 1900s, produced this sensational vanishing act. His elegant poster tells the story very efficiently. An upright piano and its player were lifted into the air within a curtained cabinet. The music stopped. The cabinet collapsed. The woman and the piano were gone.

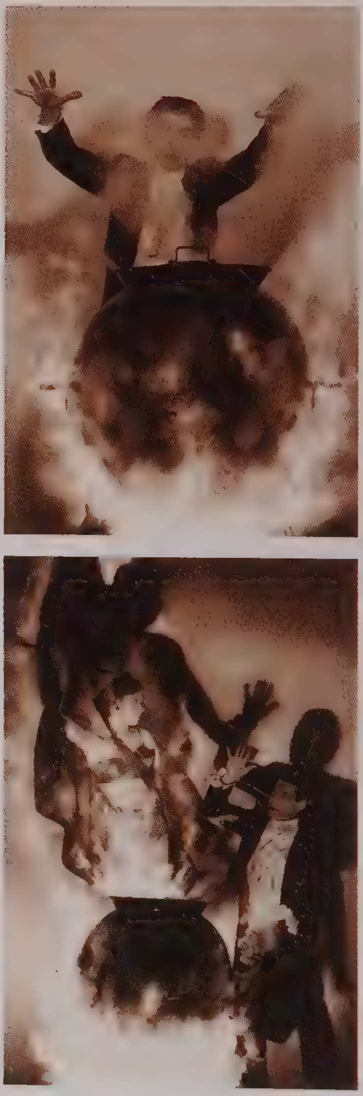

KELLAR
PRESENTING HIS LATEST AND GREATEST WONDER "GONE"

RIGHT: **1904** Harry Kellar's Gone illusion was a later version of the Vanishing Lady, an ingenious invention of the German magician Paul Valadon. In Kellar's version, the woman was isolated on a raised table in the center of the stage. She was covered with a cloth, and when the cloth collapsed, just moments later, she had disappeared.

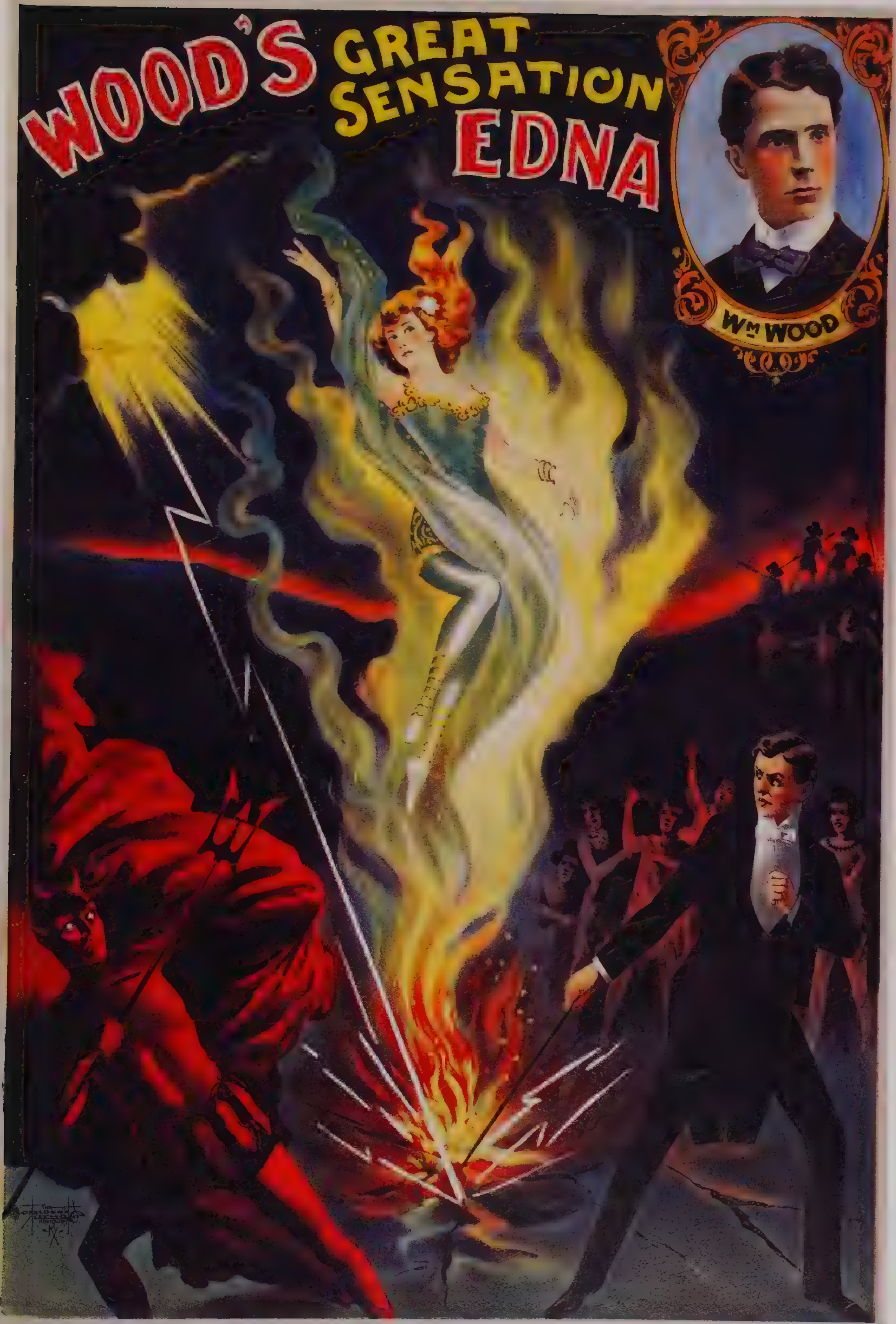


LEFT: **ca. 1928** Nadia-Nadyr, wife and assistant of magician Handy-Bandy, is portrayed on this poster as a legendary Egyptian goddess, born of the flames. Handy-Bandy was an Egyptian-born magician, Fuad Makarius, who lived in Germany and toured variety theaters. The scenery and costumes were impressively Egyptian, though the couple's tricks were all European favorites.

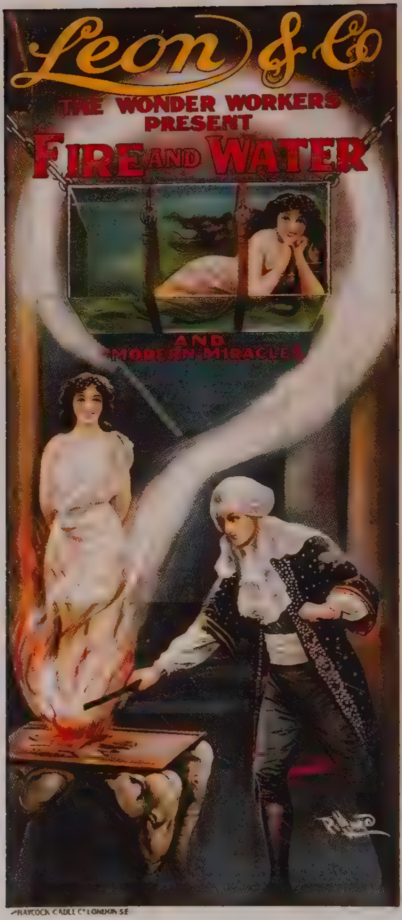
BELOW: **ca. 1950** Mireldo, a popular French illusionist, performed a dramatic act that included the Sawing a Lady in Half illusion, Cremation, and Shooting through a Woman. His Cauldron effect was a production illusion: the empty cauldron was filled with water, and from the center of the cauldron emerged Mireldo's daughter.

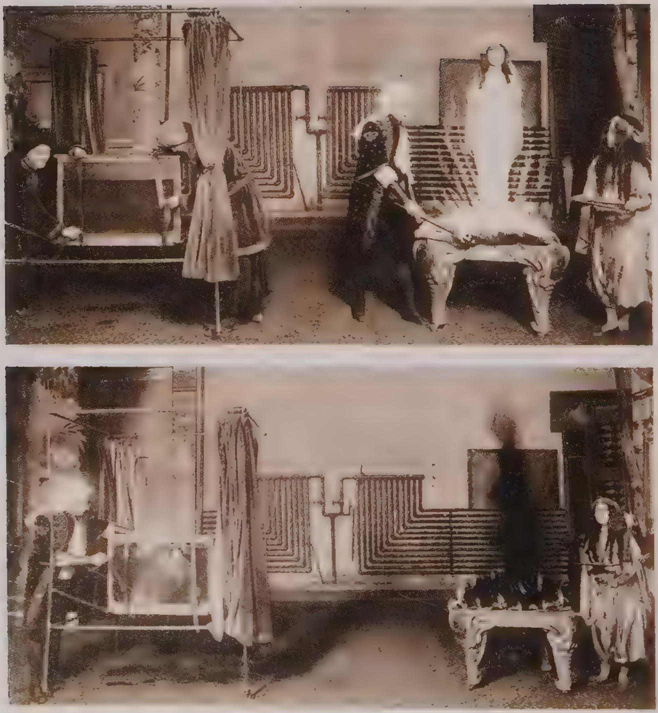


OPPOSITE: **ca. 1905** Will B. Wood's illusion Edna was an elaborate levitation feat in which a woman glided across the stage and turned cartwheels in the air—it was named after Wood's wife, who played the floating woman. Wood's poster exaggerated the mythic qualities of the illusion, portraying Edna as a goddess who emerged from the flames.


WOOD'S GREAT SENSATION
EDNA
Wm WOOD

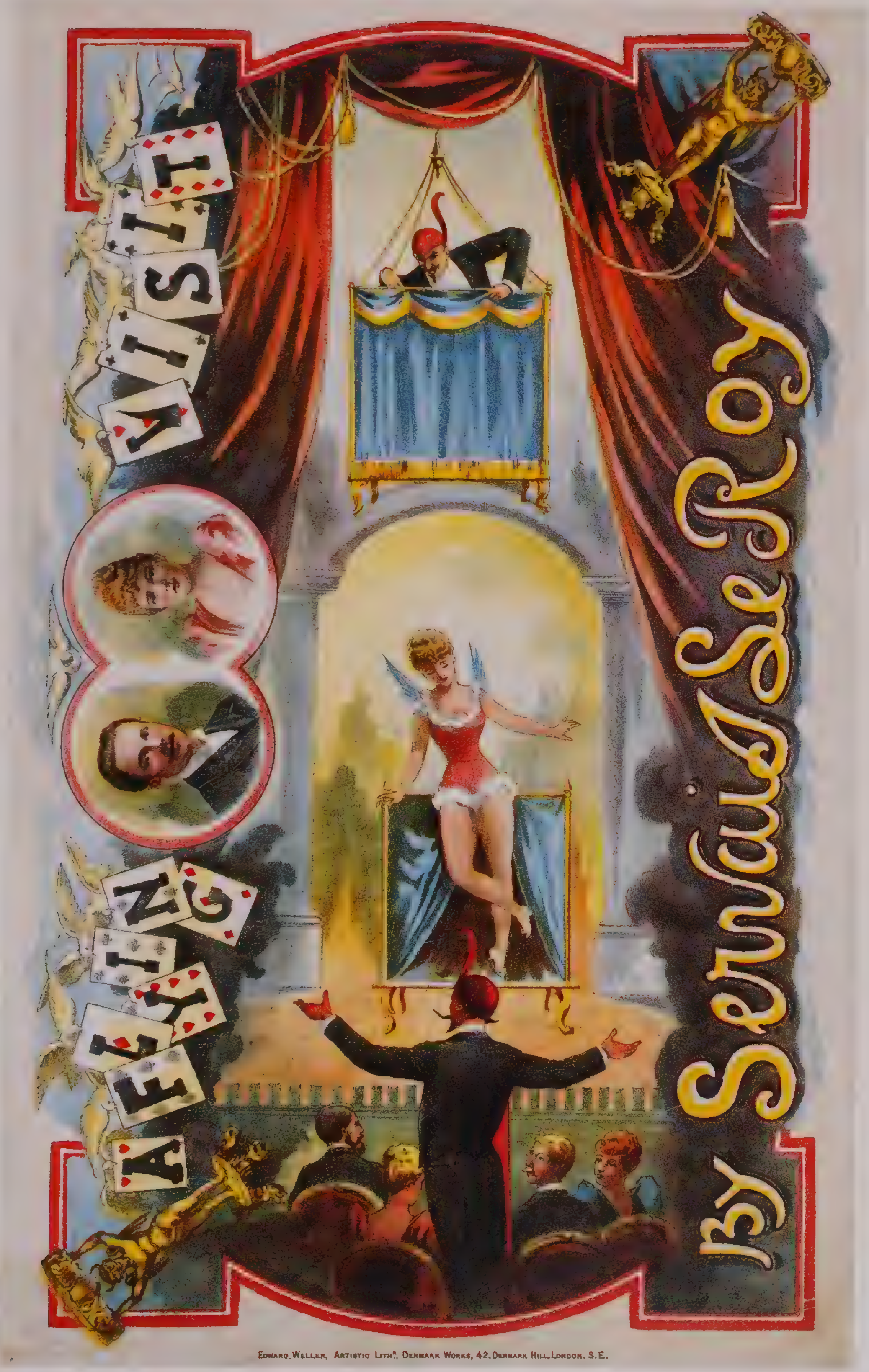
RIGHT: **1915** The Great Leon's Fire and Water illusion was a vaudeville sensation. This beautiful three-sheet poster manages to capture the spectacle, and lure the audience to the show, without ruining the surprise. The artist added a wisp of smoke to form a gigantic question mark.

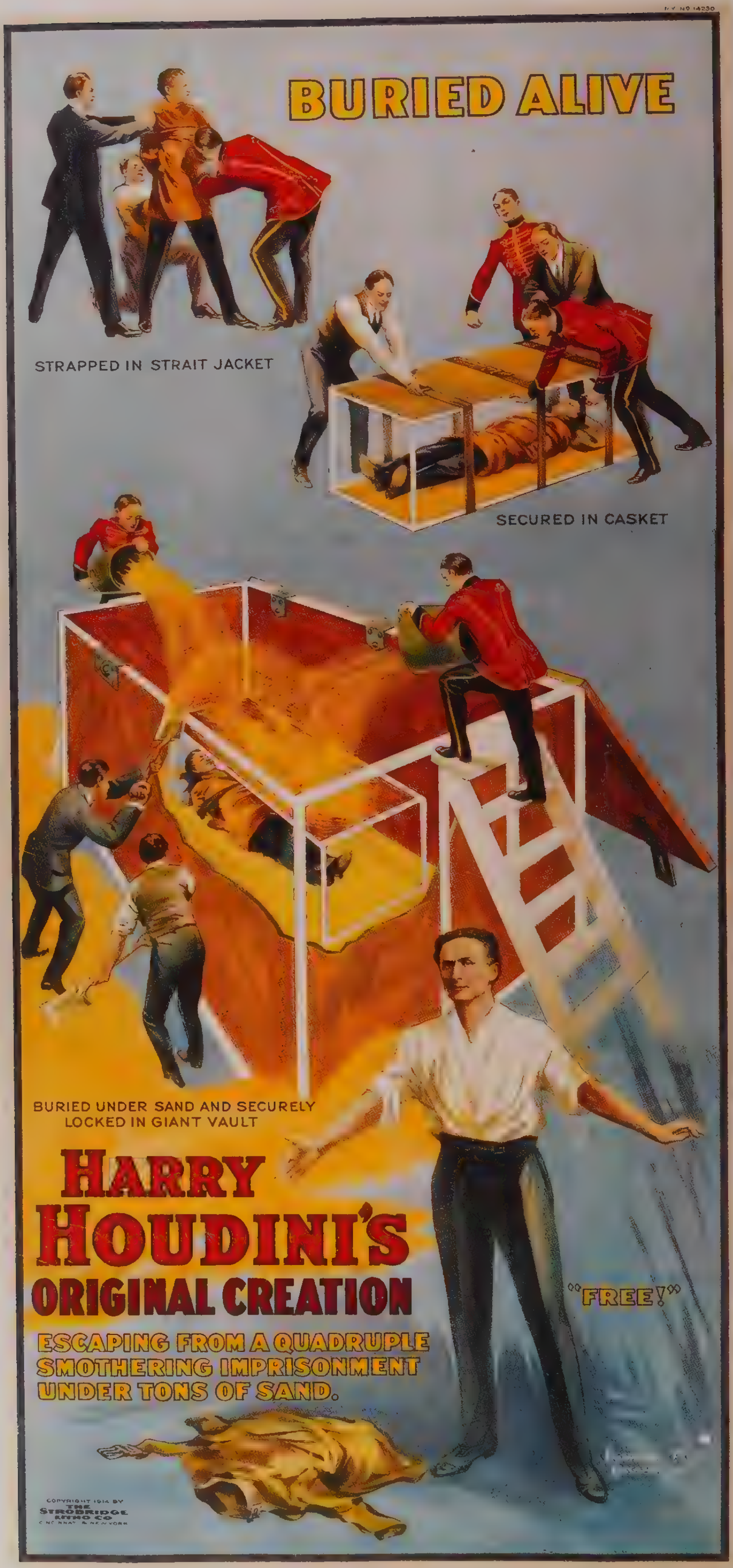


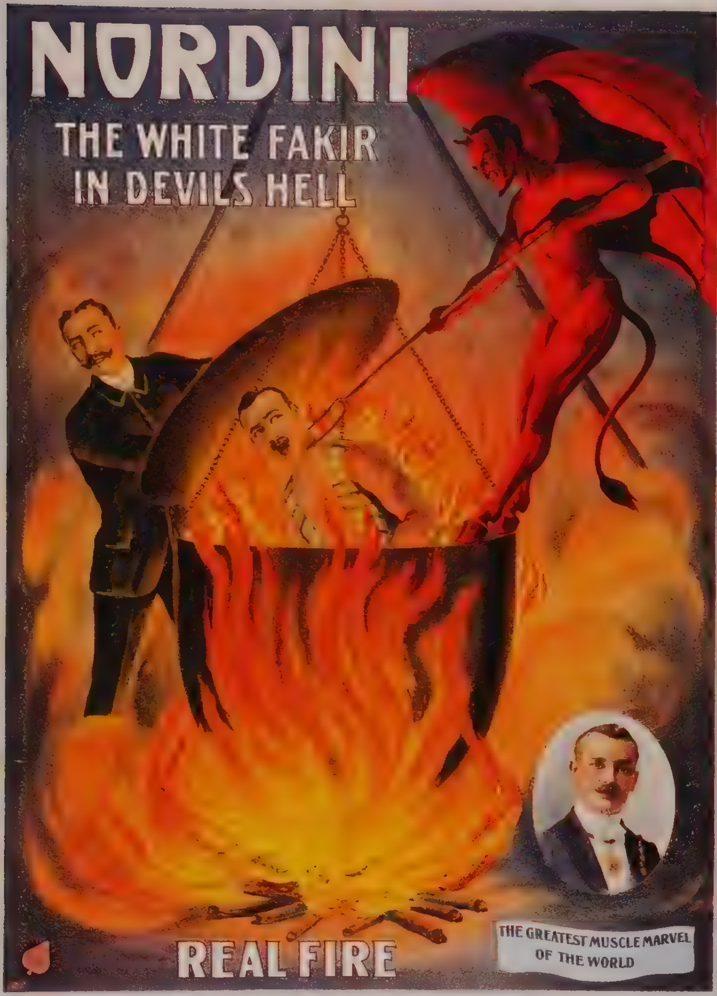


LEFT: **1915** These photographs show the Great Leon's Fire and Water illusion onstage. A woman stood on a table and was covered with a cloth. She was set afire, and the burning cloth tumbled to the table, empty. Seconds later, she reappeared, submerged in the tank of water. Notice the brick wall behind the stage. Leon had all of the drapes removed to demonstrate that the woman wasn't hiding in the scenery.

OPPOSITE: **ca. 1900** Servais Le Roy's illusion A Flying Visit was a perfect example of a magical transposition. The magician entered the lower cabinet on the stage. When the cabinet opened, it contained a woman, and the magician was now in the hanging cabinet overhead. Then the magician disappeared again, only to appear standing in the audience. This pretty and unusual poster can be viewed both horizontally and vertically.


A FLYING VISIT
BY SERVAIS LE ROY
EDWARD WELLER, ARTISTIC LITH°, DENMARK WORKS, 42, DENMARK HILL, LONDON. S.E.


N.Y. No 14230
BURIED ALIVE
STRAPPED IN STRAIT JACKET
SECURED IN CASKET
BURIED UNDER SAND AND SECURELY LOCKED IN GIANT VAULT
HARRY HOUDINI'S
ORIGINAL CREATION
ESCAPING FROM A QUADRUPLE SMOTHERING IMPRISONMENT UNDER TONS OF SAND.
"FREE!"
COPYRIGHT 1914 BY THE STROBRIDGE LITHO CO CINCINNATI & NEW YORK

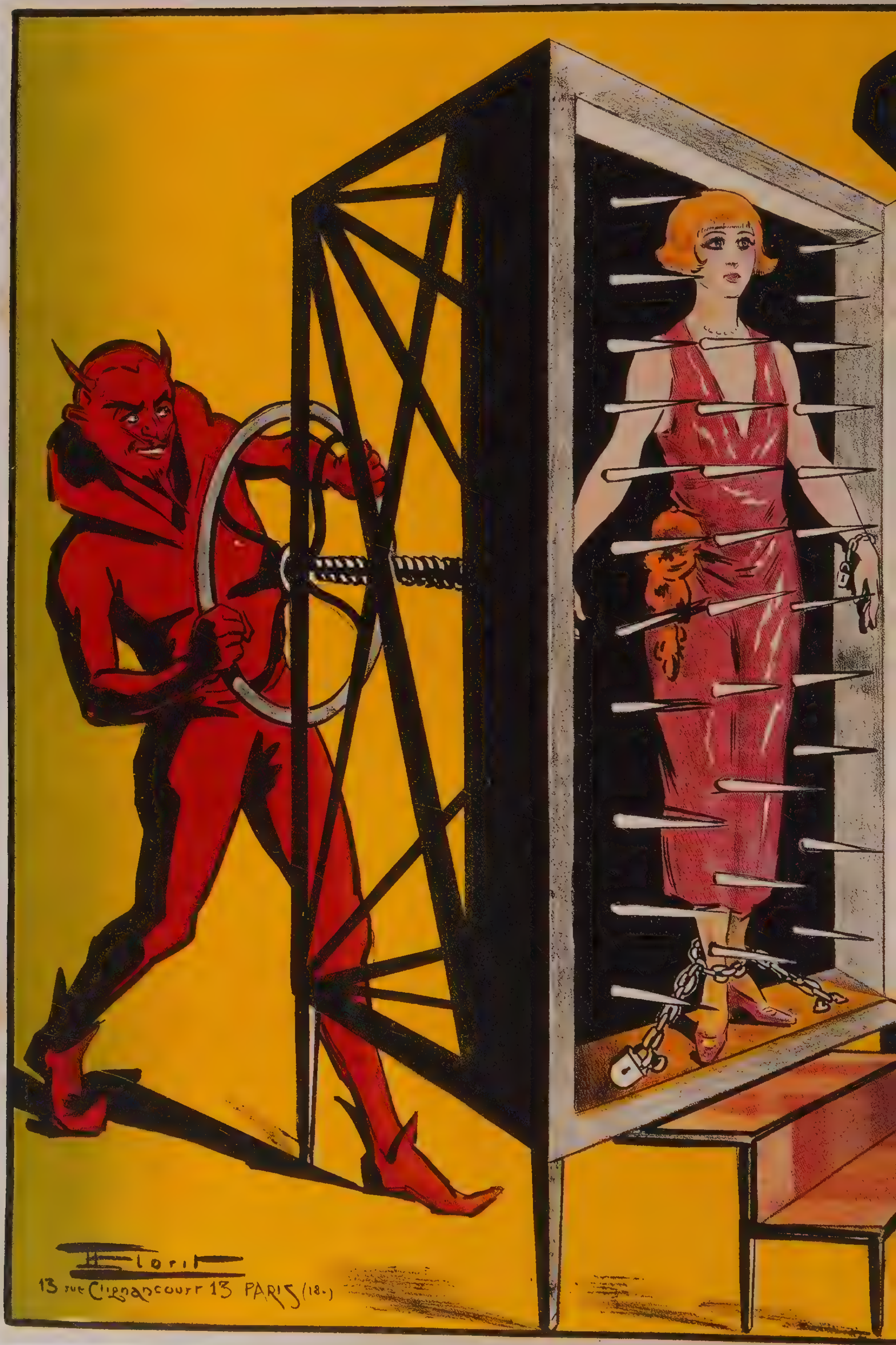


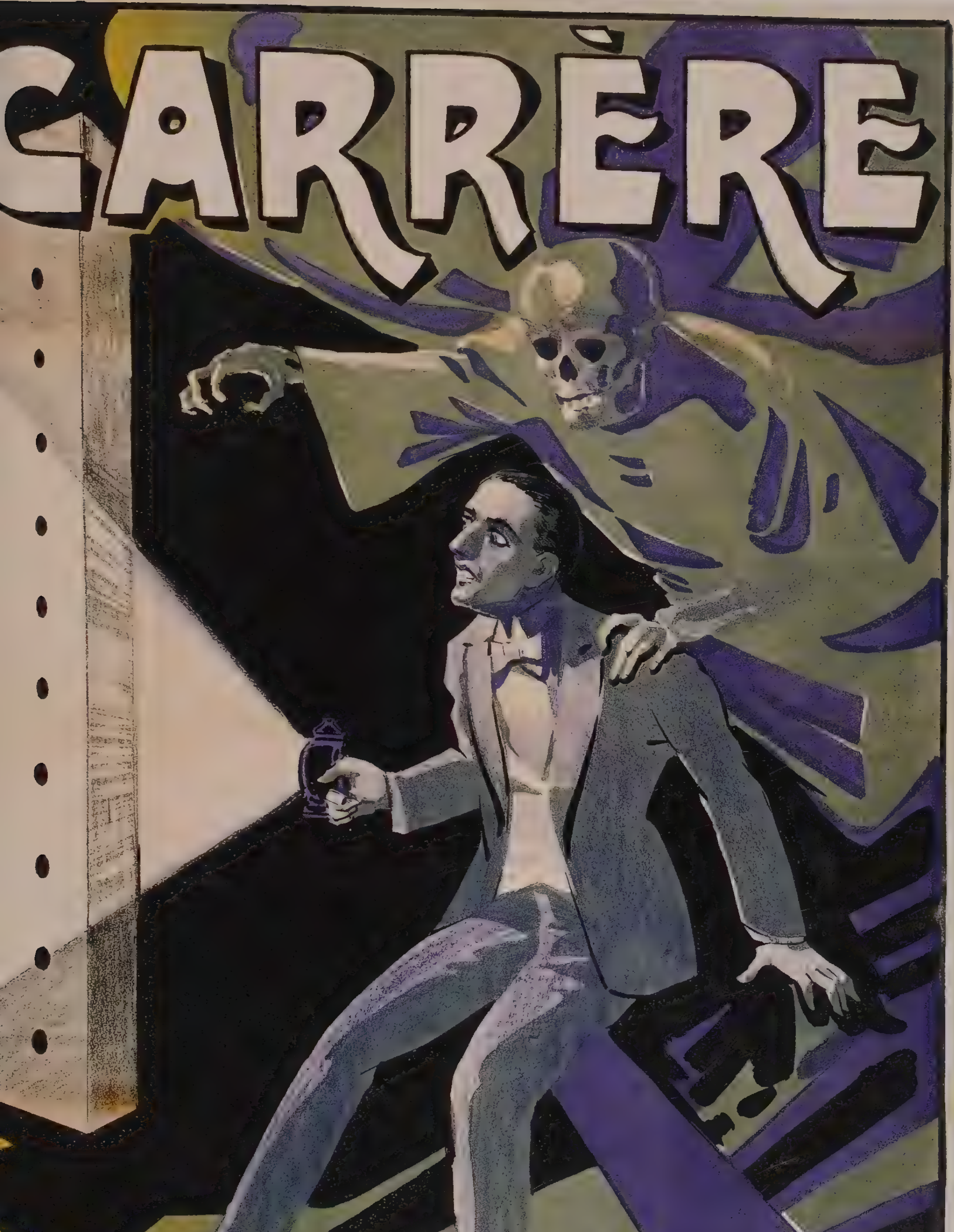
OPPOSITE: **1914** The renowned American escape artist Harry Houdini became famous for his mythic feats challenging death. Several times he attempted to be buried alive, and even produced this beautiful poster promoting the feat. The escape was never produced, and proved too difficult. An early test inspired a scribbled note in Houdini's diary: "Tried out Buried Alive... Very dangerous. The weight of the earth is killing."

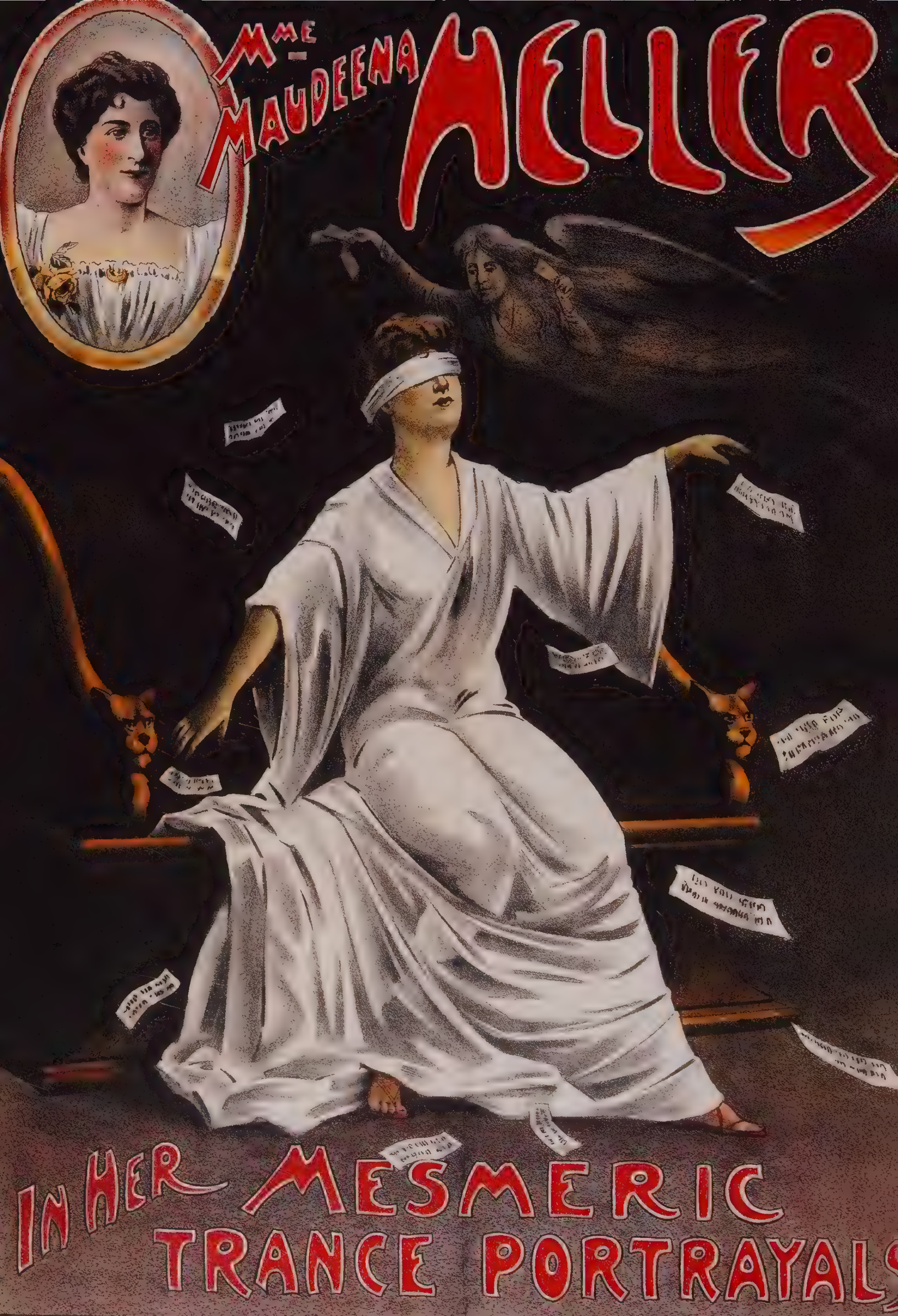
LEFT: **1910** Nordini was one of many Houdini imitators with a name deliberately chosen to match the sound and meter of the famous American's name. While Houdini escaped from water, Nordini escaped from a cauldron surrounded by flames. His billing, "the White Fakir," was a deliberate attempt to associate this European magician with the mysticism of India.

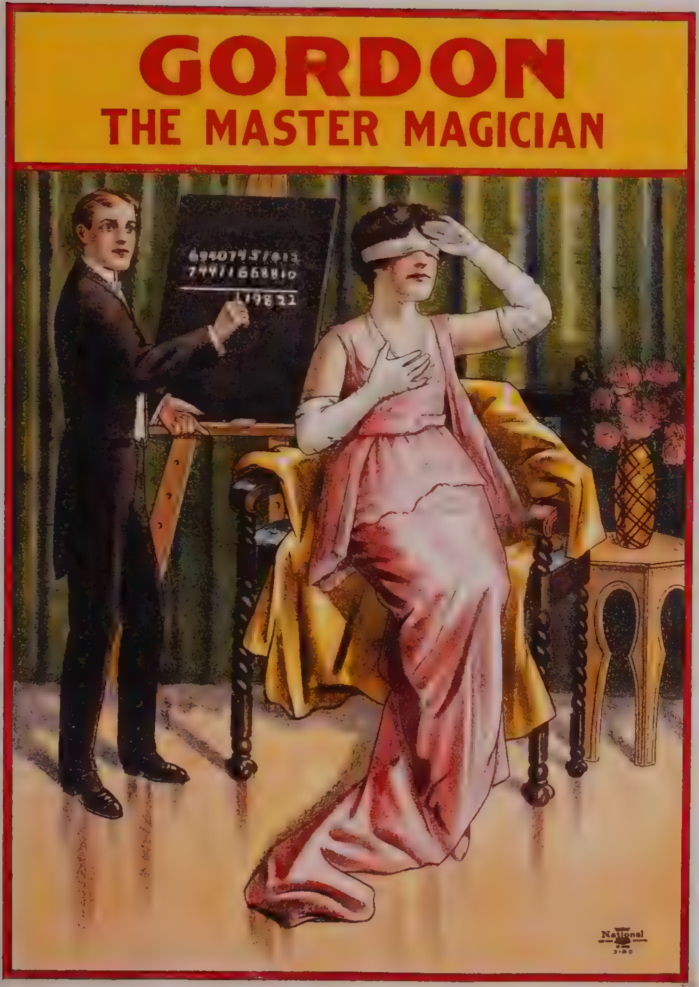
RIGHT: **ca. 1906** Houdini created an entirely new category of entertainer: the escape artist. The appeal of the escape artist was an elemental one—a man trapped by society, struggling to free himself. Houdini's status as a star was similar to that of modern sports celebrities. His physical prowess was tied to his amazing and mysterious ability to conquer any challenge.

PAGES 76–77: **ca. 1930** The British magician P. T. Selbit's Human Pincushion, sometimes called the Indestructible Girl or the Spiker, was a 1923 invention. In this French poster advertising the magician Carrère, The Spiker seems to be not merely an illusion, but an elaborate torture from a horror story, in which the magician is victimized by his own magic.


Florit
13 rue Clignancourt 13 PARIS (18.)


CARRÈRE

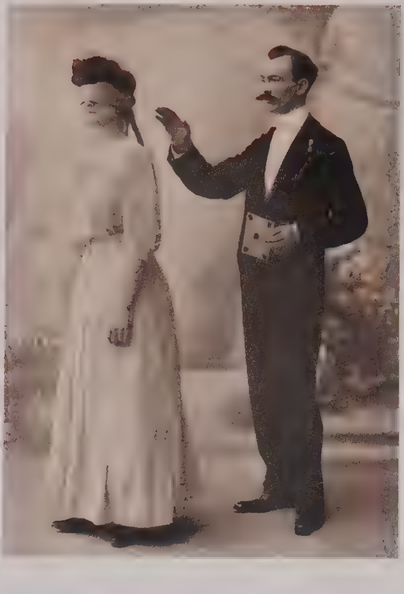

Mme
MAUDEENA MELLER
IN HER MESMERIC
TRANCE PORTRAYALS

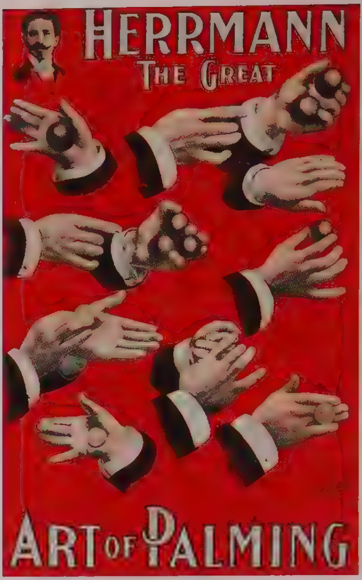


LEFT: ca. 1910 The mind-reading act, depicted in this poster, was a variation on the performer's supposedly psychic powers. The blindfolded medium could divine numbers, words, names, or objects suggested by the audience. By the turn of the 20th century, the act was popular enough to inspire stock posters, like this one, which could be imprinted with the performer's name.

OPPOSITE: ca. 1909 Mind-reading acts apparently read the thoughts of spectators, using various psychological skills and deception. Maudeena Heller was the wife of George Waldo Heller, an Australian magician who in his programs offered "Marvelous Séances in Odic Force." Playing the part of a modern oracle, she divined questions posed by the audience, offering supposedly psychic answers.

RIGHT: ca. 1900 The Polowskys, a Polish magic duo, enact the traditional pose of the mind-reading act. The female medium, blindfolded, takes the part of the psychic high priestess. The gentleman, holding a sealed envelope with a mystery inside of it, poses the questions. The act capitalized upon the public's persistent interest in the occult and supernatural phenomena.





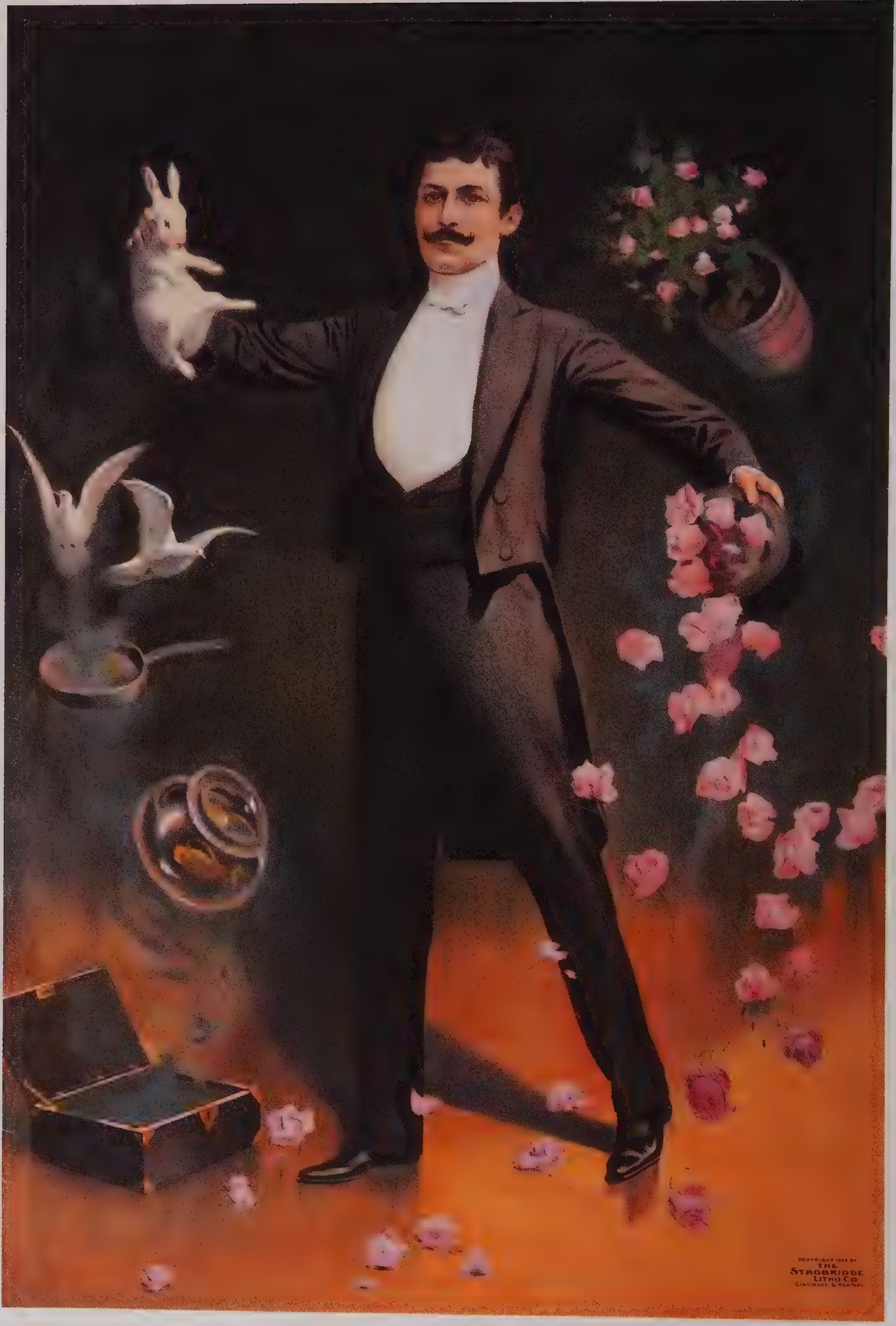
ABOVE: **ca. 1900** Upon Alexander Herrmann's death, Leon Herrmann, his French nephew, inherited the Herrmann show. By that time, the public had become aware of magicians' secret maneuvers like "palming." Leon used the term in this poster, boasting of his skills at hiding objects in his hands.

ABOVE: **ca. 1935** Cardini was the stage name of Richard Pitchford, a British-born magician. His innovative act focused on sleight-of-hand productions: cigarettes, billiard balls, and playing cards all appeared mysteriously at his fingertips. Cardini portrayed a tipsy gentleman during a night on the town, continually tormented by the objects that seemed to appear in his hands.

OPPOSITE: **ca. 1905** Charles Selwyn was an American-born magician who toured through India, South Africa, and Australia. This photo gives a good impression of magic's evolution, circa 1900. Selwyn wears old-style knee britches and has a stage filled with bits of fringe and velvet. But he plucks cards from the air (or from behind his knee), which was the latest fashion in magic.

RIGHT: **ca. 1895** Max Malini, born Max Katz Breit in Poland, was an itinerant magician who made a career of entertaining society with his unexpected, memorable, and intimate sleight-of-hand feats. He publicized himself by saying, "You'll wonder when I'm coming; you'll wonder even more when I've gone." In this publicity photo, Malini delicately plucks an ace from the air.

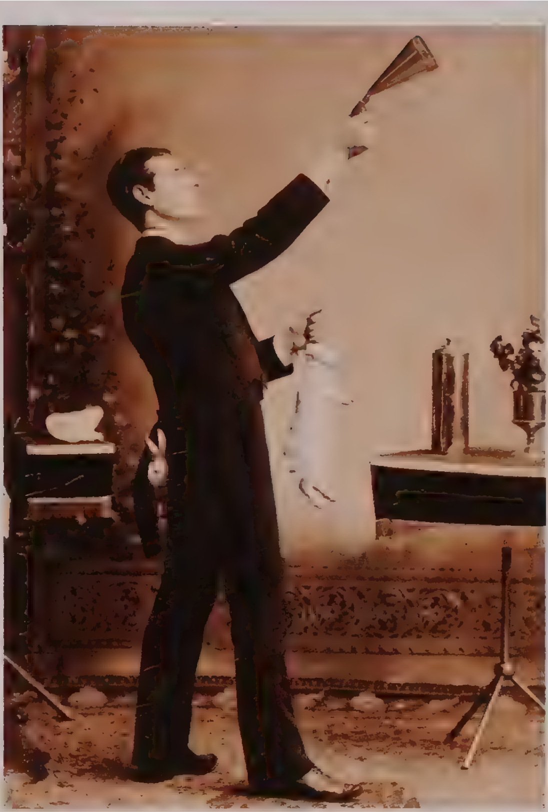
Sincerely Yours

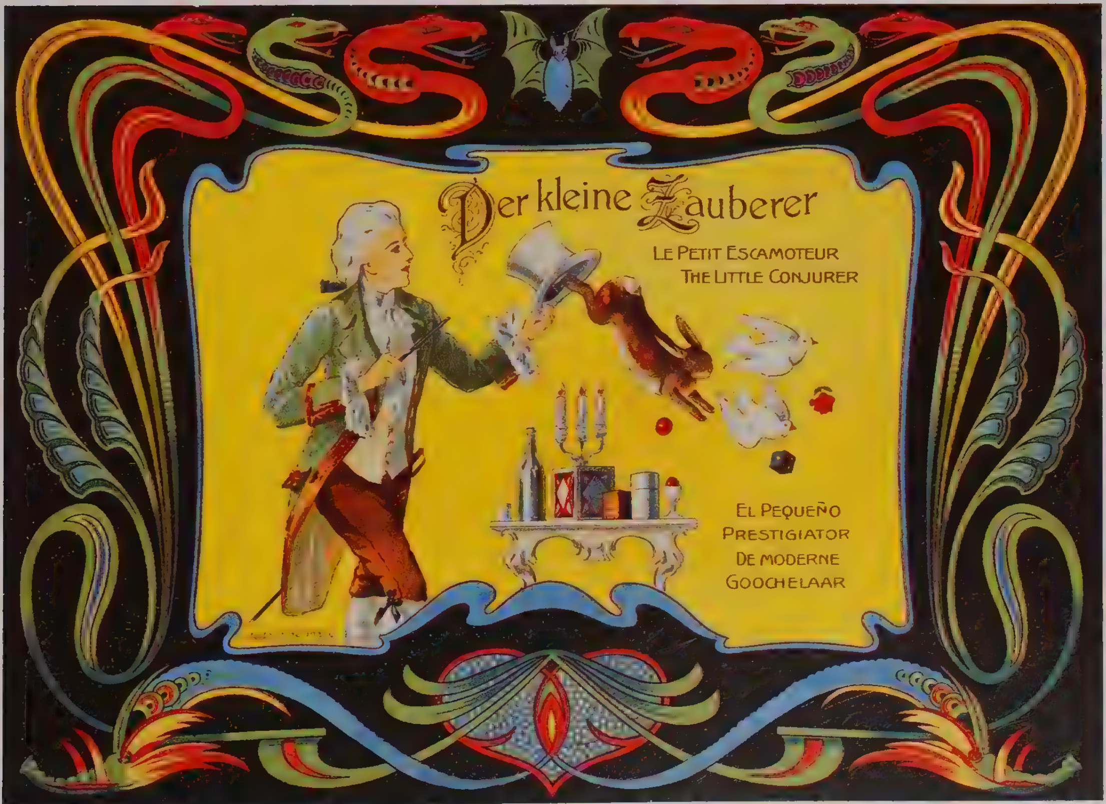

COPYRIGHT 1898 BY
THE
STROBRIDGE
LITHO CO.
CINCINNATI & NEW YORK

OPPOSITE: **1899** This beautiful lithograph from the Strobridge Lithograph Company of Cincinnati, Ohio, is a stock poster. It could be purchased in quantity, then imprinted with the magician's name. The image captures the "something from nothing" charm of appearance tricks—the flowers, doves, and rabbit have obviously just been conjured up by this busy magician.

RIGHT: **ca. 1905** Fred Fisher, a little-known magician, poses to visualize a popular trick, producing a rabbit. But he also added his own comical touch, showing another rabbit concealed within his coat and about to make its escape. Many magicians joked about such popular clichés: it was all "done with mirrors," or it all "went up his sleeve."

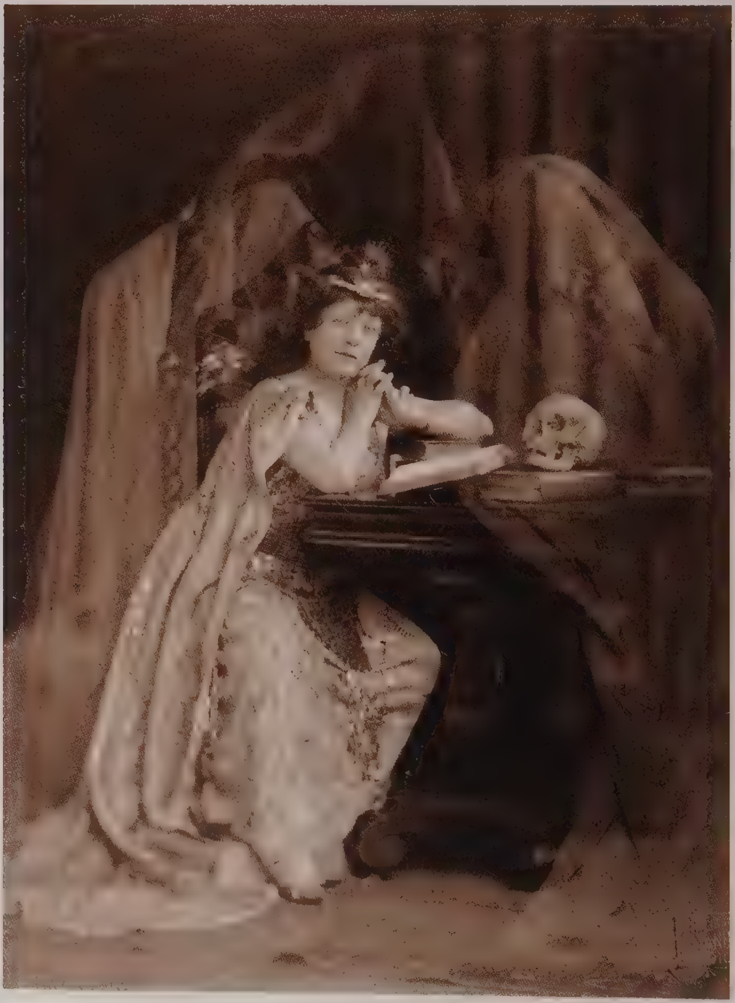
BELOW: **ca. 1900** The cover of a German magic kit shows a rabbit emerging from a hat. Despite its fame, the trick was performed by only a handful of magicians, including Herrmann the Great and David Devant. It was originally based on a joke about fancy hats with rabbit-fur linings. The magician made the lining come to life.





LEFT: **ca. 1900** Mercedes Talma was born Mary Ann Ford in London, and married the young Belgian illusionist Servais Le Roy. In addition to serving as the assistant in his famous illusions, she became an expert at intricate coin manipulations, producing hundreds of silver dollars at her fingertips. As the "Queen of Coins," she had equal billing with her husband.

OPPOSITE: **ca. 1890** Adelaide Herrmann's skills as a dancer made her an ideal magician. She presented sleight of hand with billiard balls as well as lavish production illusions and dramatic scenes. One magic critic praised her long, successful career: "Madam Herrmann carried on for 20 years. She was an actress and had charm, plus conjuring ability."



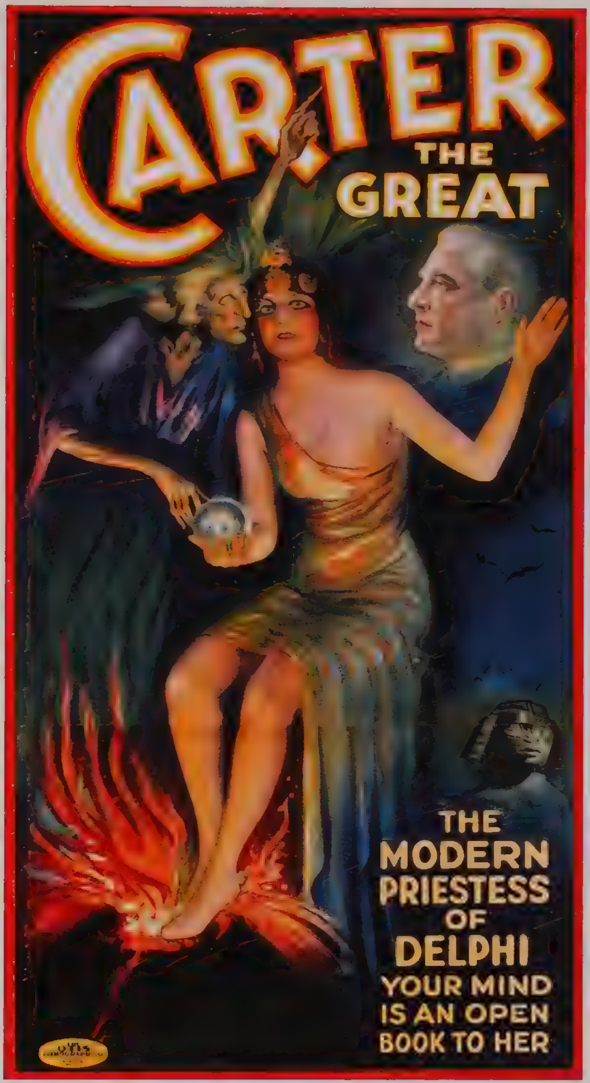
RIGHT: **ca. 1900** Adelaide Herrmann, seen here apparently posing with ghosts, may have been history's most sensational female magician. Born Adelaide Scarsez in London, she started her career as a professional dancer and performed a bicycle act. Upon marrying Alexander Herrmann (Herrmann the Great), she became his assistant. After his death in 1896, she produced a lavish and skillful magic act in American vaudeville.

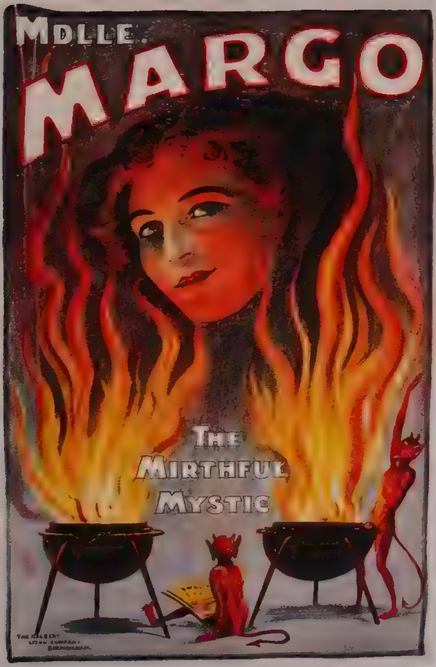
LEFT: **ca. 1950** Marian Chavez first learned magic from her husband, Benito Chavez, and worked as his assistant. In the 1940s, the couple opened the Chavez Studio of Magic in Los Angeles, which they later moved to Hollywood. The famous Chavez school taught intricate sleight-of-hand skills with cigarettes, cards, thimbles, and doves, and Marian's skills inspired a generation of Chavez graduates.

OPPOSITE TOP LEFT: **ca. 1920** Onstage, Evelyn Maxwell was far less exotic than her poster images, but she was an effective actress and magician. Carter's program advertised her as "The Psychic Marvel. She knows all, she sees all, she tells all. Ask her." Reviewers praised her dramatic flair and mysterious mind-reading skills.

RIGHT: **ca. 1930** The platinum blonde mistress of manipulation, Suzy Wandas, was born Jeanne van Dyk to a Belgian family of conjurers. Reportedly, she learned sleight of hand with cards and coins from the innovative American magician T. Nelson Downs. Wandas produced coins and cards until her retirement in 1959.

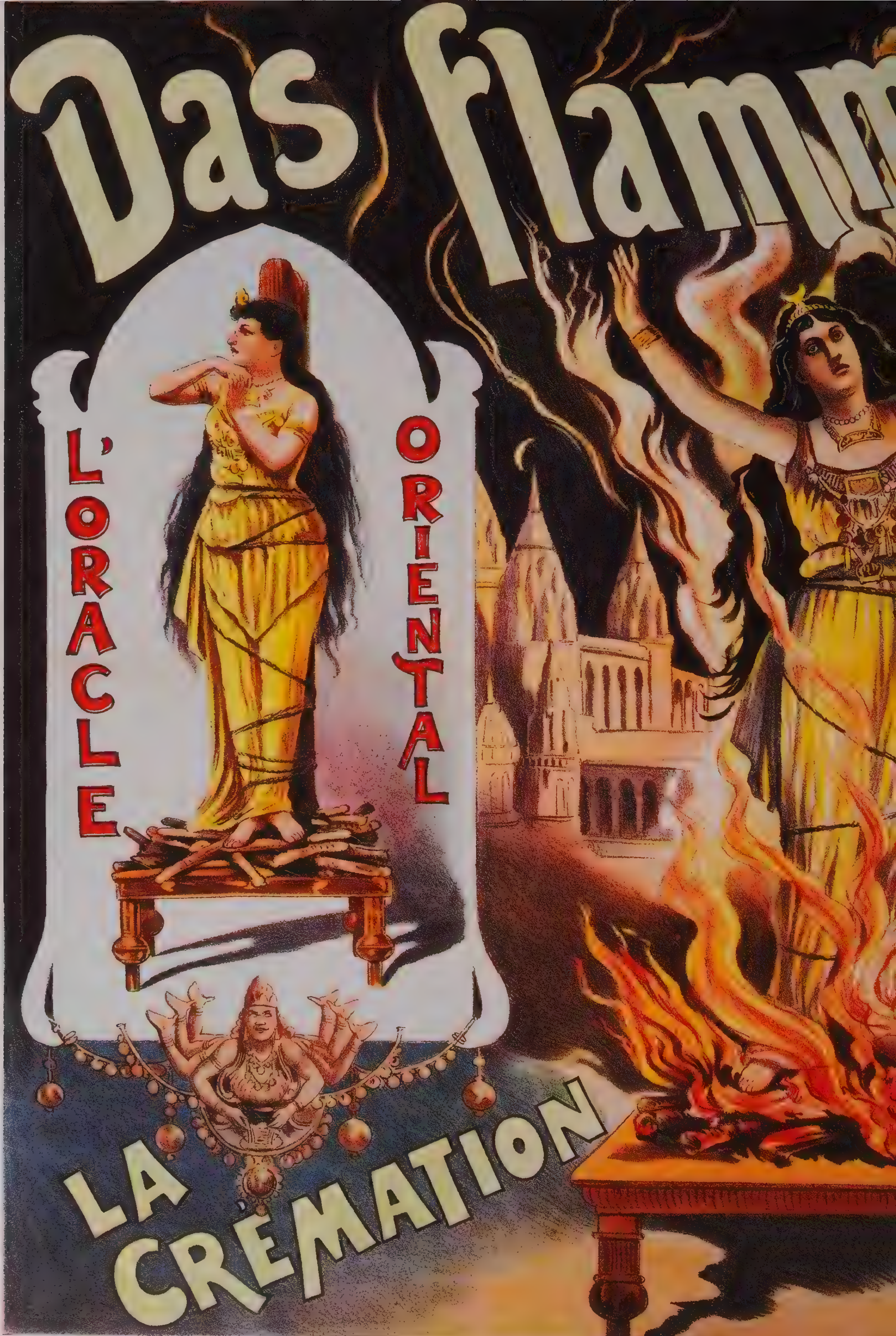
PAGES 88–89: **ca. 1898** The magician Professor Seeman introduced the modern Cremation illusion in the 1880s. A woman stood on a raised table and was covered with an asbestos curtain. A torch was applied and flames emerged from the curtain. When the drapery was removed, a pile of bones was discovered. This beautiful image, promoting an unidentified German magician, exaggerates the fire and intensifies the drama.

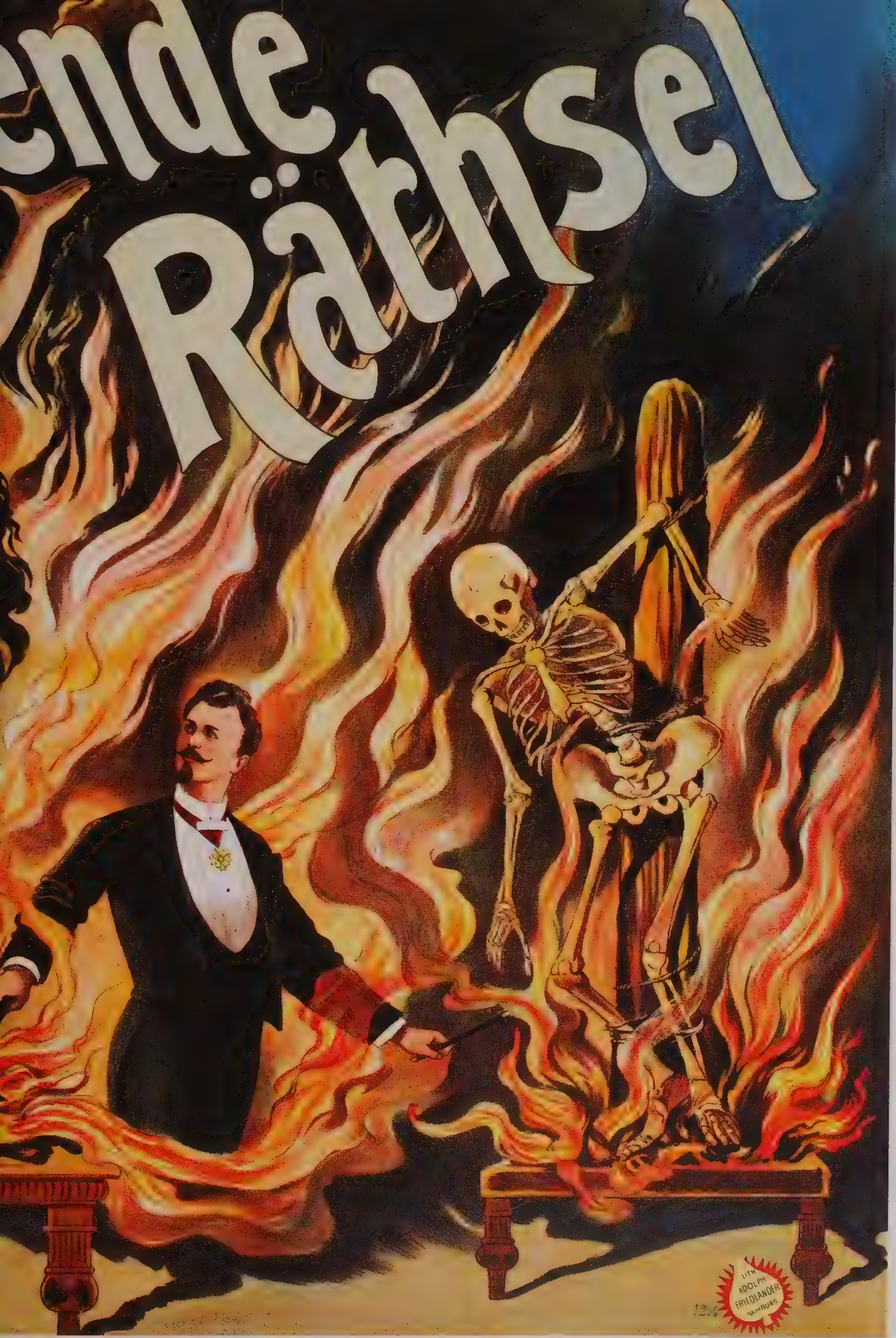

CARTER
THE GREAT
THE MODERN PRIESTESS OF DELPHI
YOUR MIND IS AN OPEN BOOK TO HER


MDLLE. MARGO
THE MIRTHFUL MYSTIC

ABOVE: **1926** Charles Carter was an American magician who toured the world with an elaborate show. His costar was Evelyn Maxwell, who performed a mind-reading act, answering personal questions posed by the audience and offering psychic readings. This poster casts Maxwell in the traditional role of high priestess, portraying her with medieval witches, Egyptian myths, and Greek oracles.

LEFT: **ca. 1915** Margo was an Irish-born magician. Her poster portrayed her as a timeless mystic, but onstage she performed with a light French accent and comically fractured French-English. She was adept at many of the favorite tricks of her brother magicians. Her feature was pouring out different drinks from a pitcher of plain water.


Das flamm
L'ORACLE
ORIENTAL
LA
CRÉMATION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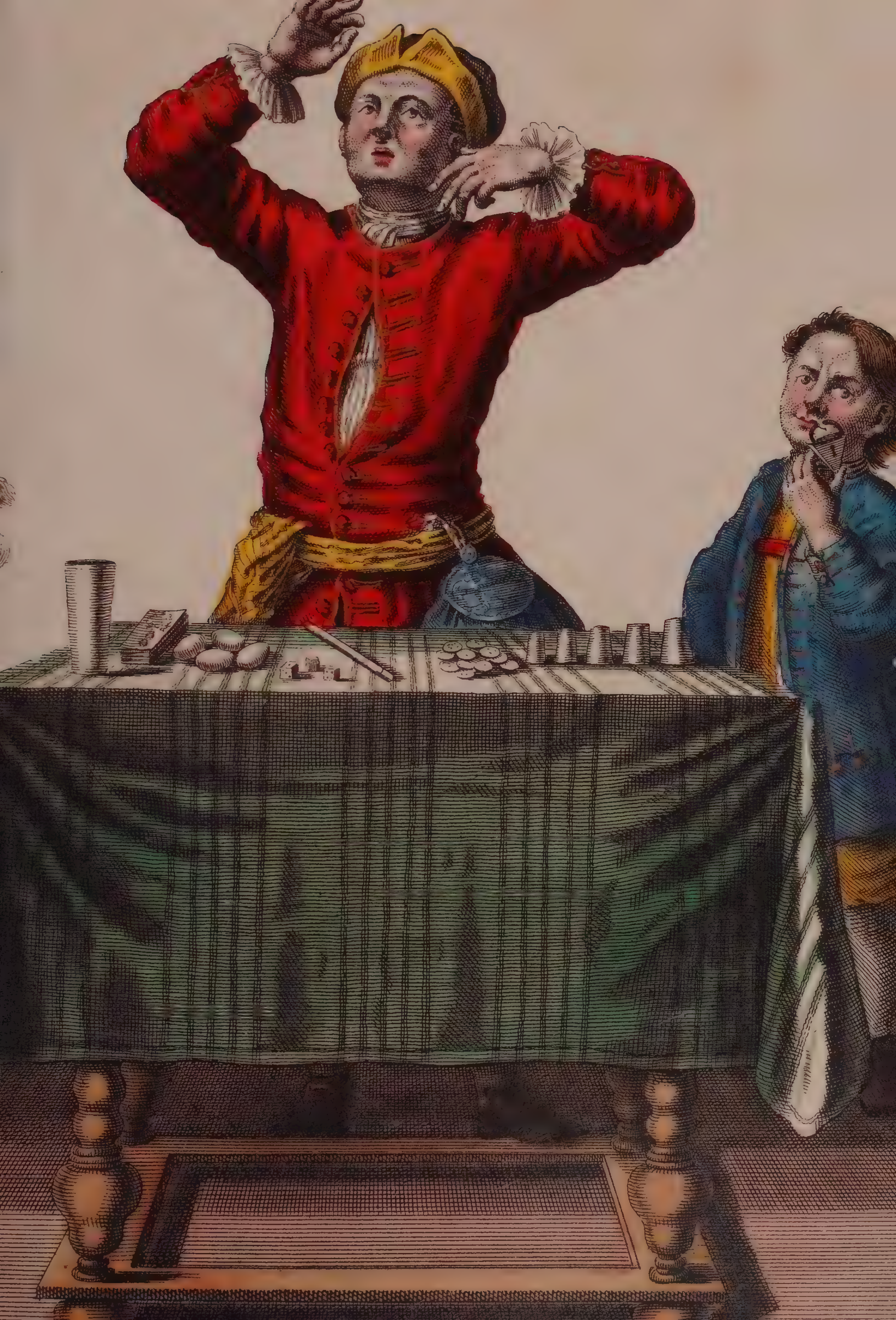
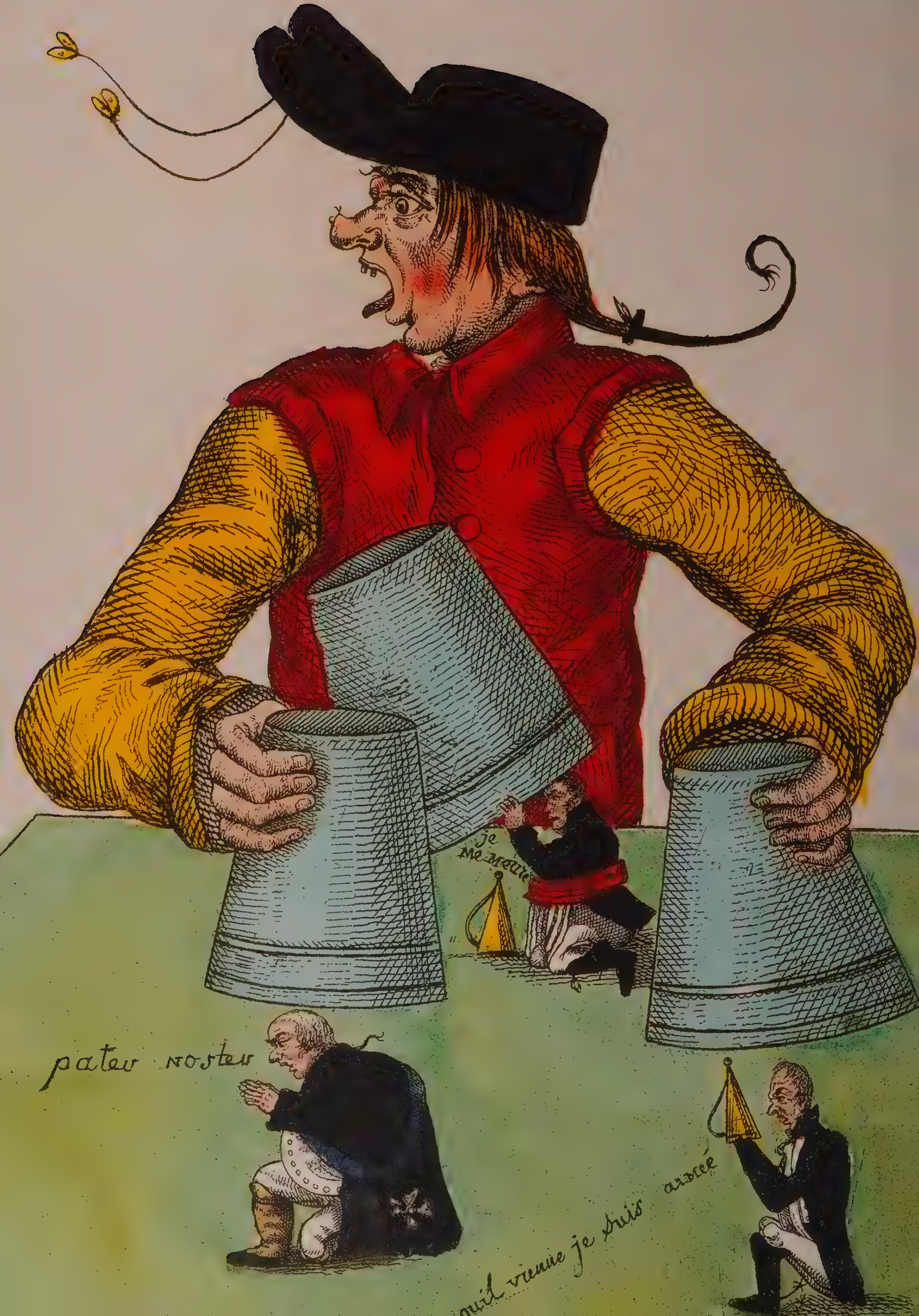
2 2

DEVILISH DECEPTION: THE ORIGINS OF WONDER

Jim Steinmeyer

2 2





je Me meure
pater noster
quil vienne je Suis armée

2

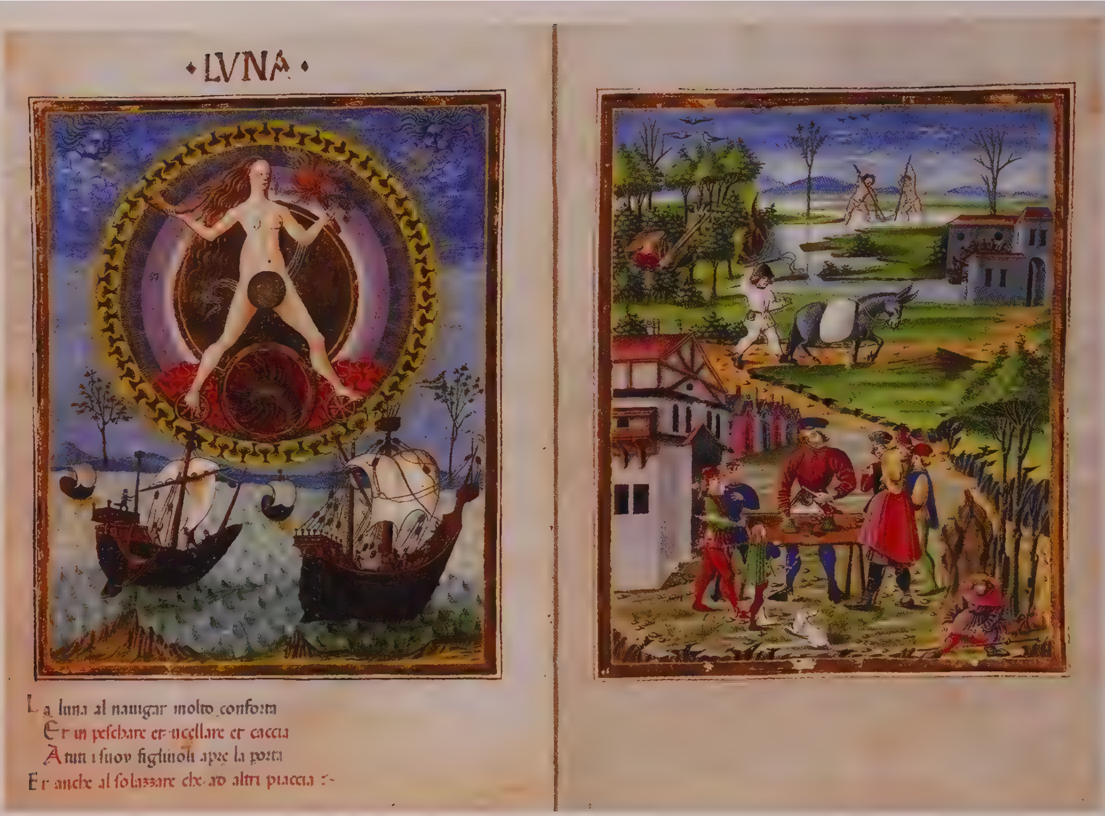
Jim Steinmeyer

DEVILISH DECEPTION: THE ORIGINS OF WONDER

The sleight-of-hand magician, called a *tregetour*, stands behind a simple trestle table, stacking and unstacking three polished metal cups. The cymbal-like clang of the cups is part of the show, intended to demonstrate that the cups are solid and empty, and also to summon the crowd. Sure enough, spectators at the fairground soon gather in a semicircle in front of the table. The magician removes a wooden wand and a small cork ball from his *gibecière*, a cloth apron around his waist with an oversize pouch, a bit of professional wardrobe that keeps small props at hand.

PAGE 91: **ca. 1720–1730** This hand-tinted German engraving shows the conjurer at work, extracting the maximum dramatic effect from the cork balls he manipulates at his fingertips. The cups and balls are prominent on his table. His assistant apparently passes a lock through his cheek. This 17th-century deception is a perfect analogy for the necessary secrecy behind any magic show.

OPPOSITE: **1815** For centuries, three cups on a conjurer's table have epitomized sleight of hand. The cups become the typical mystery—part marvel and part swindle—to describe a magic show. Here the three cups are used in a French engraving to parody Napoleon's political sleight of hand.



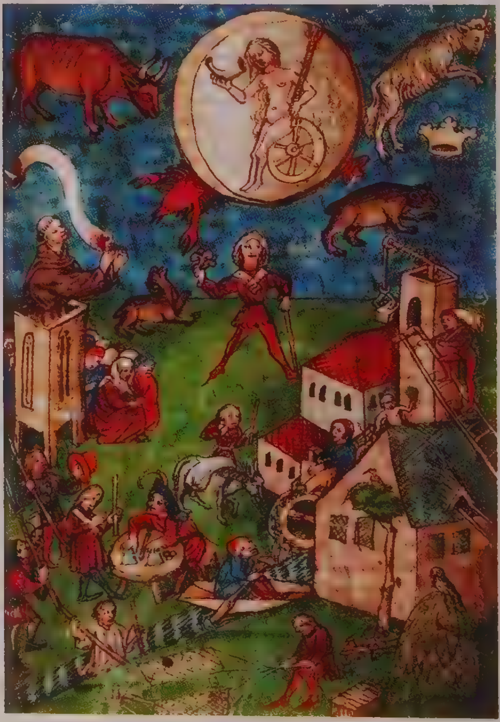
• LVNA •

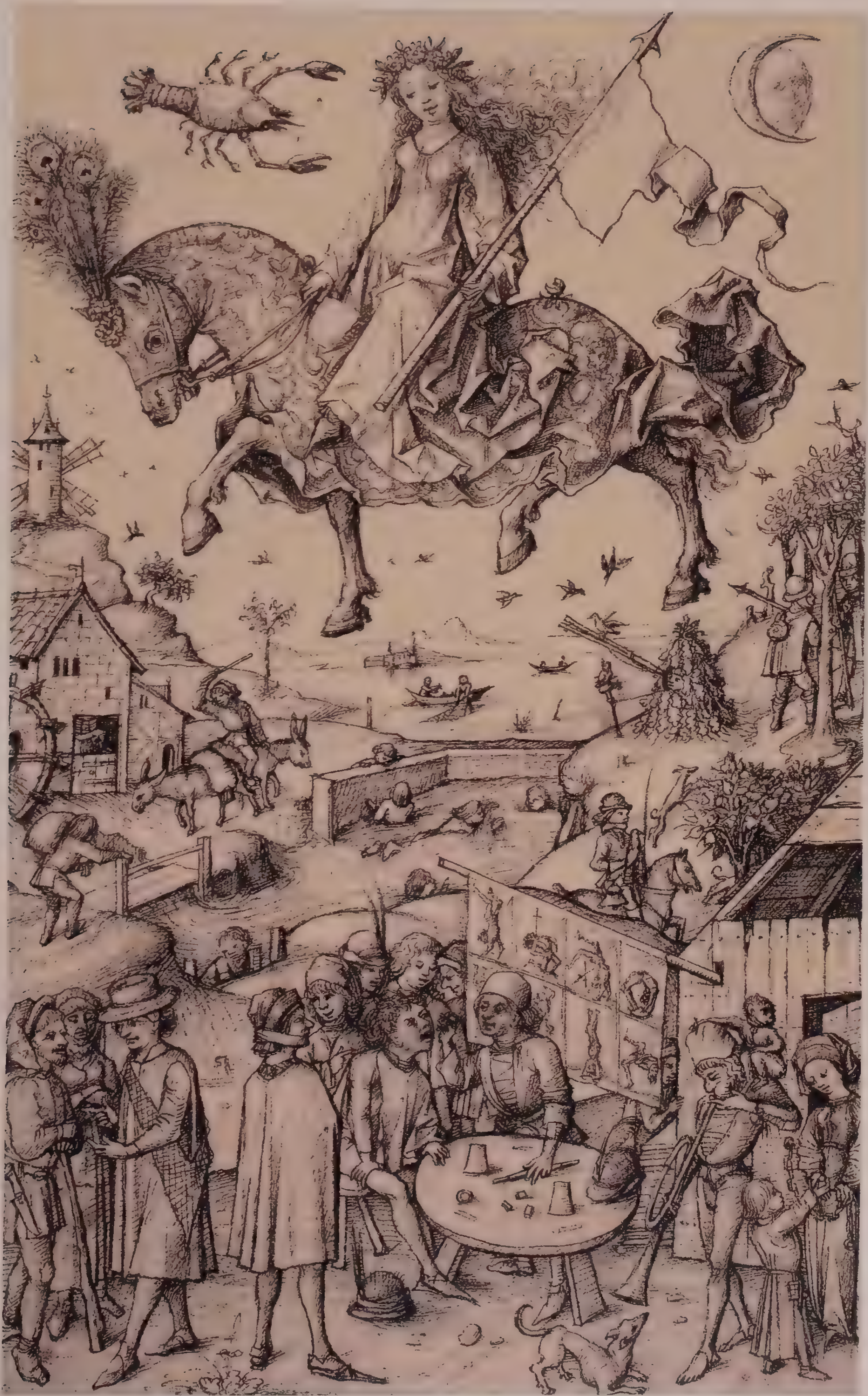
La luna al nauigar molto conforta
Et in peſchare et uccellare et caccia
A tutti i ſuoi figliuoli apre la porta
Et anche al ſolazzare che ad altri piaccia :-

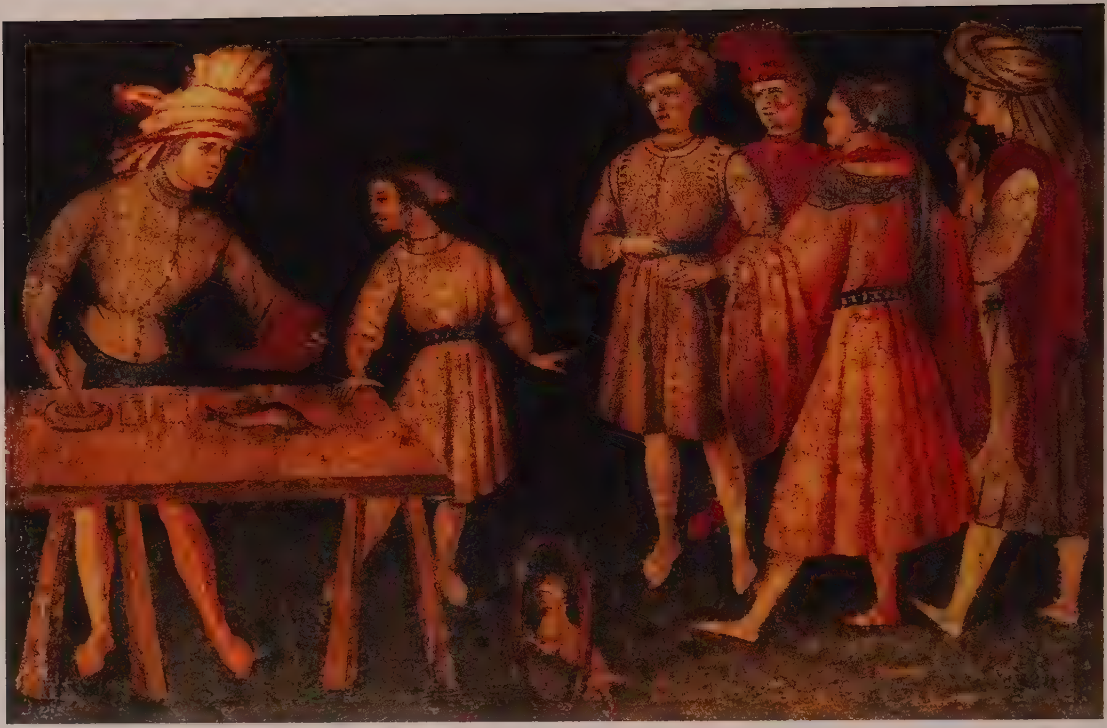
ABOVE: **ca. 1455** A beautiful illustration from the astrology manuscript *De sphaera* associates itinerant conjurers, sailors, and vagrants with the astrological qualities of the moon. These qualities include fickleness and fierce independence. The magician stands behind his cups-and-balls table at the bottom of the right image.

RIGHT: **1404** Joseph of Ulm's illustration *Children of the Planets* includes a striking early drawing of a cups-and-balls magician in the middle of a performance. Supposedly ruled by the moon, the magician is considered to be cold, capricious, and, of course, completely untrustworthy.

OPPOSITE: **ca. 1480** This illustration, *Luna and Her Children*, is from the legendary manuscript *The Housebook*, which demonstrates the astrological qualities of the seven planets. Using a magician to represent the qualities of the moon, this drawing gives an evocative impression of a 15th-century performance. As the magician leans forward to show the ball to his spectators, his essential props, including cups, balls, and a wand, are all visible on the wooden table.







ABOVE: **ca. 1470** This unusual early oil painting of a Florentine conjurer is believed to have been produced by a student of the great Italian master Masaccio.

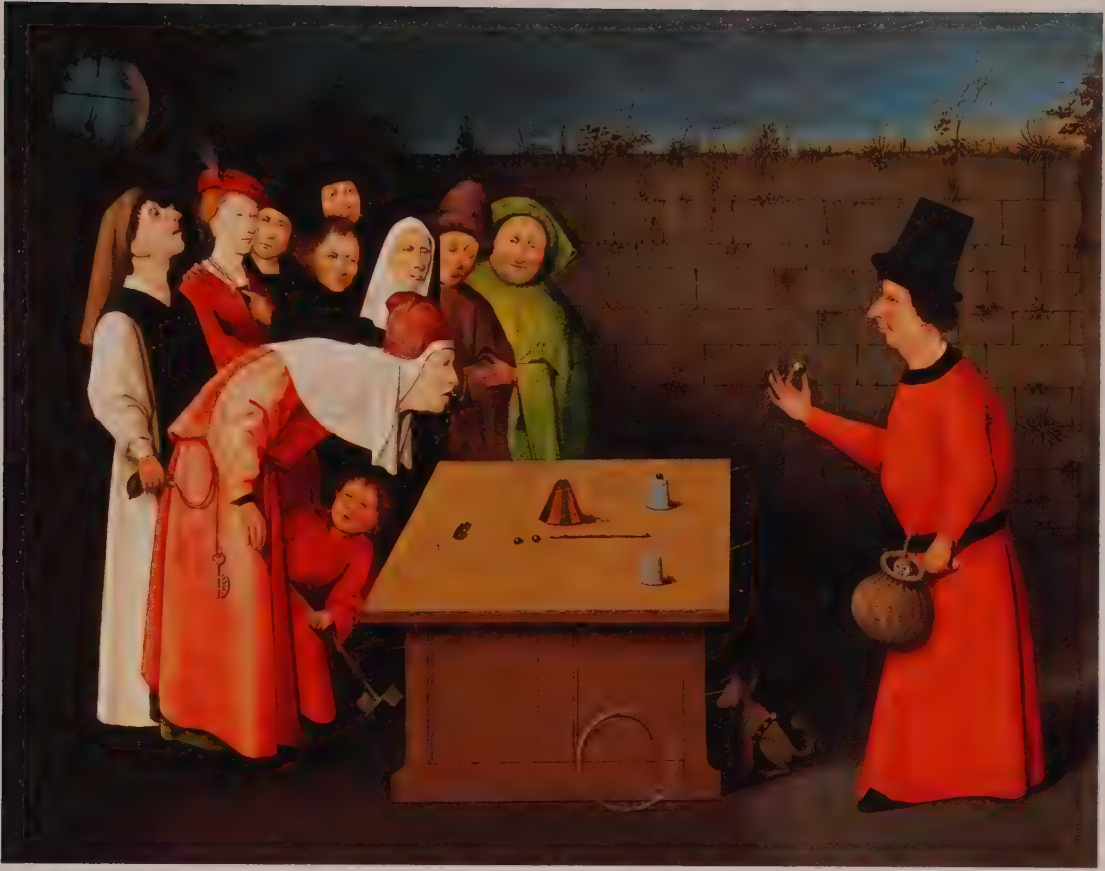
The conjurer, at the left, wears the distinctive *gibecière*, a handy apron of pockets, around his waist.

The magician talks quickly, humorously, and engagingly. This first part of the performance is pure salesmanship, deliberate palaver to build expectations. The magician first brags about his recent performances before the local gentry; he then slides into a tease about the mysteries that surround us and offers a few polysyllabic Latin words about the powers of the magic wand, which he calls "Jacob's Rod." He places the ball under one of the three cups, taps the cup with his wand, and evokes a solemn incantation—simple bathos now, a serious spell directed at a cork ball—and quickly lifts the cups to reveal that the ball has transposed from one cup to another. It's a good trick; the audience is intrigued, instinctively stepping closer as the pace increases. The magician removes two additional cork balls from his apron. The balls appear and disappear beneath the cups. All three balls assemble inside of one cup, or they dissolve in the performer's hands, reappearing when a chosen cup is lifted. The audience's laughter and wonder are now equally distributed; the performer pretends to be surprised when the balls disappear, as if the magic is temporarily beyond his control. For the climax, each ball grows in size, filling each cup. The performer takes his bow, and boldly asks to be rewarded with a few tossed coins.

Cups & Balls: The Eternal Classic

Only the title, *tregetour* (an Old French word for trickster), and the performer's distinctive *gibecière* identify this performance as a relic of history. The Cups and Balls, generally accepted as the oldest identifiable trick in the magician's arsenal, dates from at least the first century AD, and has never gone out of fashion. Depicted in a 15th-century painting by Hieronymus Bosch and a 16th-century engraving by Pieter Bruegel the Elder (pp. 97 and 98–99), the trick is the perfect test of the magician's abilities, combining subtle sleight of hand, brassy performance skills, and cunning misdirection. The Cups and Balls exists somewhere between the dangerous world of gambling (it evolved into con games like Thimble Rigging, the Shell Game, and Find the Lady), innocent fun, and a daunting life lesson: everyday objects, right under your nose, may not be what they seem. Or we might view the Cups and Balls as symbolizing magic itself, turning up unexpectedly at a fairground to amuse the poor, or at the palace to amaze the king. Like the cork balls, magic seemed everywhere yet nowhere—simultaneously in the service of angels, or condemned as the work of the devil.

The Westcar Papyrus from Egypt, dating from about 1800 BC, may contain the earliest record of a conjuring



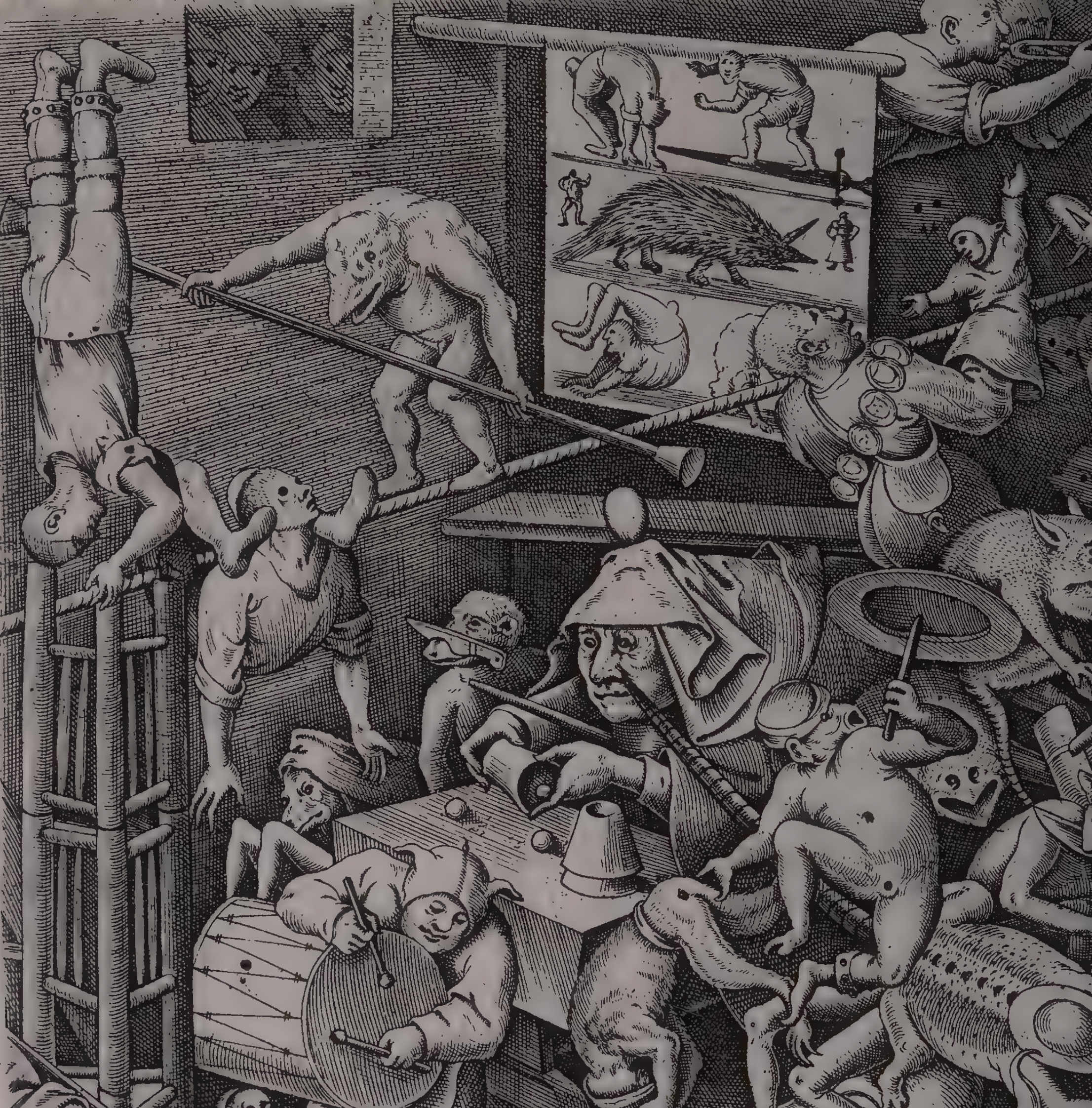
performance. Around 2000 BC, a wise old wizard named Djedi was called before King Khufu, the builder of the Great Pyramid of Giza. "It is told," King Khufu said, according to the text, "that you can restore the head that is taken from a live creature." "I can indeed, Your Majesty," answered Djedi. The King replied, "Then let a prisoner be brought forth and decapitated." "I would rather it were not a man," said Djedi. "I do not deal [with humans] in such a manner." A duck was brought forth and its head was cut off; and the head was thrown to the right and the body to the left. Djedi spoke magic words. Then the head and body came together and the duck rose up and quacked loudly. The same was done with a goose.

Magician or Shaman?

This account likely includes the sort of exaggeration that occurs in any retelling, but there's a clear impression of a real performance, and a similarity to later decapitation tricks. But the duck illusion was merely the overture; King Khufu was anxious to hear the magician proceed with prophesies about his heirs. The Westcar Papyrus demonstrates how ancient magicians might have combined deception with the archetypal shaman or medicine man myth: first, the outsider is summoned and challenged; second, his power is established by demonstrating his control over life and death; and third, he offers inevitable hints about the future. Rogan P. Taylor,

ABOVE: **ca. 1510** Hieronymus Bosch's oil painting *The Conjurer*, portrays the magician as a temptation for the naive public. As the spectators watch, amazed, a pickpocket, far left, works behind the crowd. Again, the Cups and Balls is this magician's specialty. He is accompanied by a performing dog, which presumably will jump through the hoop.

PAGES 98–99: **1565** Pieter Bruegel the Elder's *The Fall of the Magician* (engraved by Pieter van der Heyden) combines grotesque characters with popular magicians' tricks from the 16th century. Notice the decapitated head, lower left. The mysterious frog, lower right, demonstrates the Cups and Balls, a magician's wand, and the lock-through-the-cheek illusion.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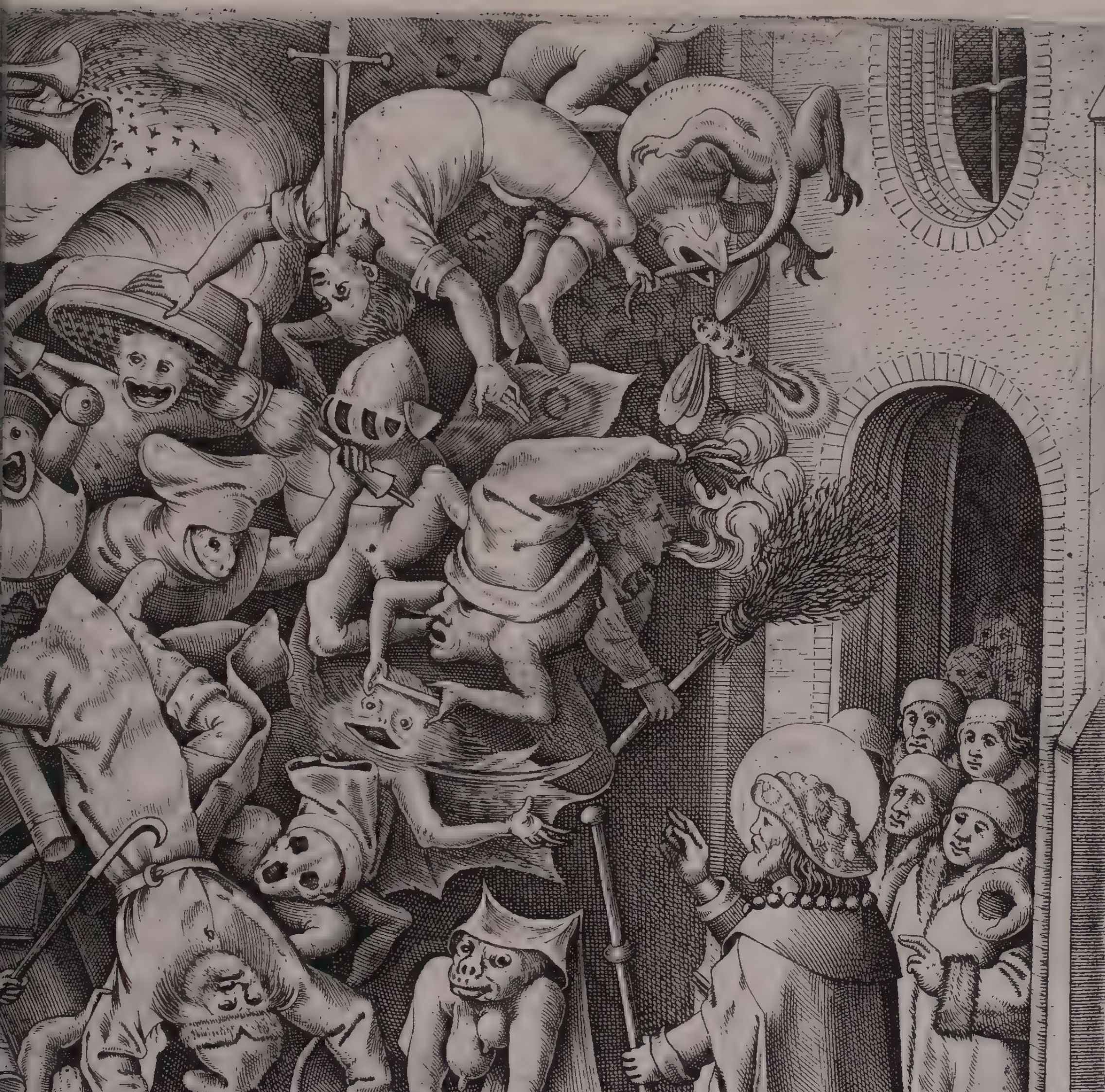
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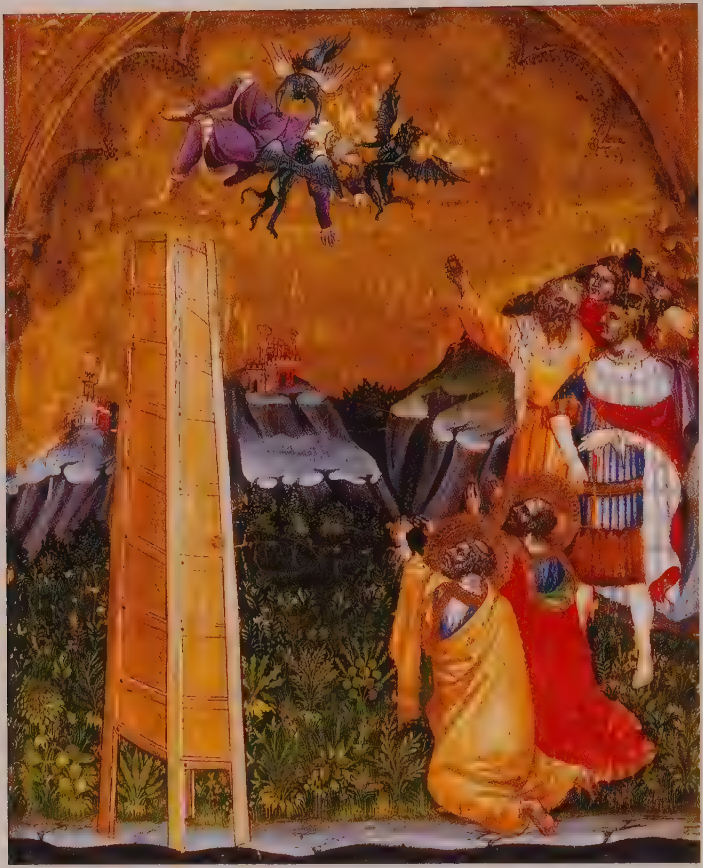
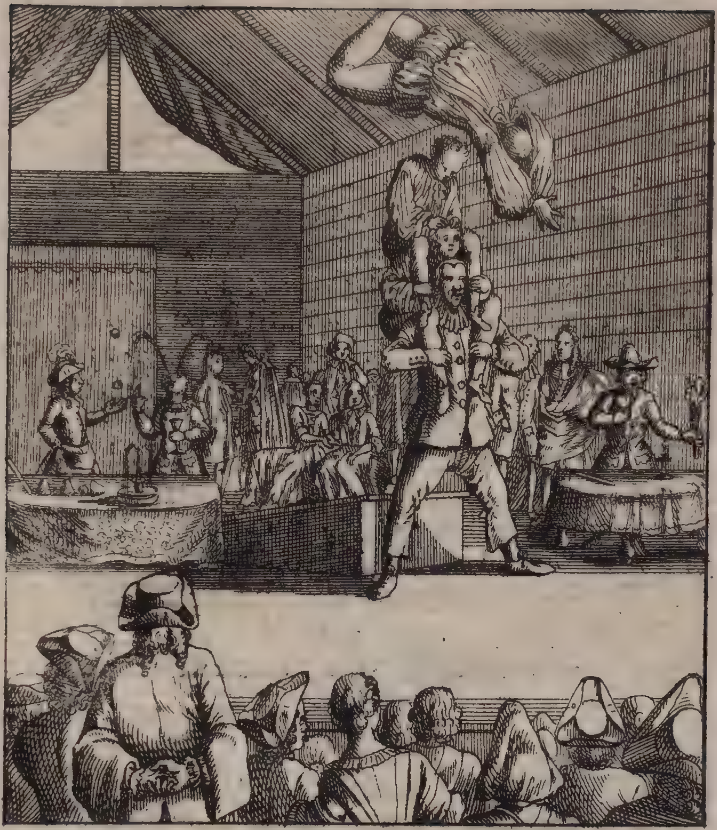


LEFT: **early 15th century** This detail from an altarpiece shows Jacobello del Fiore's *The Fall of Simon Magus*. A Jewish mystic, Magus could supposedly levitate. By the early 1400s, church spectacles incorporated special effects, including elaborate levitation illusions, to re-create the sacred stories of angels and saints.

author of *The Death and Resurrection Show*, describes the formula for a shaman's test: "To be in the company of spirits does not make a shaman. It is what the shaman can *do*, as a result, which counts. Part of a new shaman's trial-by-performance is designed to demonstrate precisely that the shaman possesses the spirits, rather than the opposite." In this way, the magician's skills have two parallel histories. In a fairground, the minstrel, juggler, or conjurer might dazzle with the innocent permutations of a ball changing color in his hand. In a dark alley around the corner, a soothsayer, fortune-teller, or witch might use the same trick to hold a white stone against the head of a customer, and show that it's turned blood red—filled with offending poison. As Harry Houdini himself said centuries later, "It's not the trick, it's the magician." Different magicians used their skills to serve different motives.

By the first century AD, Seneca the Younger, the Roman playwright and philosopher, wrote of the magician's Cups and Balls in his *Epistles to Lucilius*. By then the trick was so well known that Seneca considered it a simple amusement. "It is the trickery that pleases me. But show me how the trick is done, and I have lost my interest therein." Not every observer watched with the same cool, analytical attitude. The trickery led to trouble for early performers—too temptingly close to dishonesty, thievery, or, as some claimed, witchcraft. The early church was critical of all entertainers, and magicians earned special disrespect. As late as 1066, sleight-of-hand performances were outlawed in some French towns.

Ironically, a different kind of deception—theatrical illusion—was performed in service to the church. By the Middle Ages, the Passion plays of Europe, the liturgical dramas of Christ's life, and *sacre rappresentazioni* (religious spectacles staged in cathedrals) depended on the use of elaborate special effects. By 1400, the "ascents" of angels and saints, from the floor to the ceiling, had evolved into ingenious levitation illusions created with lighting and scenery. In *Stage Flying*, author John A. McKinven describes a typical marvel from 1439 presented in Florence, Italy. "There was a mighty rumble of thunder and the Portal of Heaven above opened to reveal a Paradise with God suspended in midair, enveloped in a dazzling light from 'infinite little lamps.' A group of angels playing flutes, lyres and bells surrounded the Father. A series of rings bearing angel figures rotated around the opening to heaven." It was a spectacle that would have been at home on a Las Vegas stage some 500 years later.



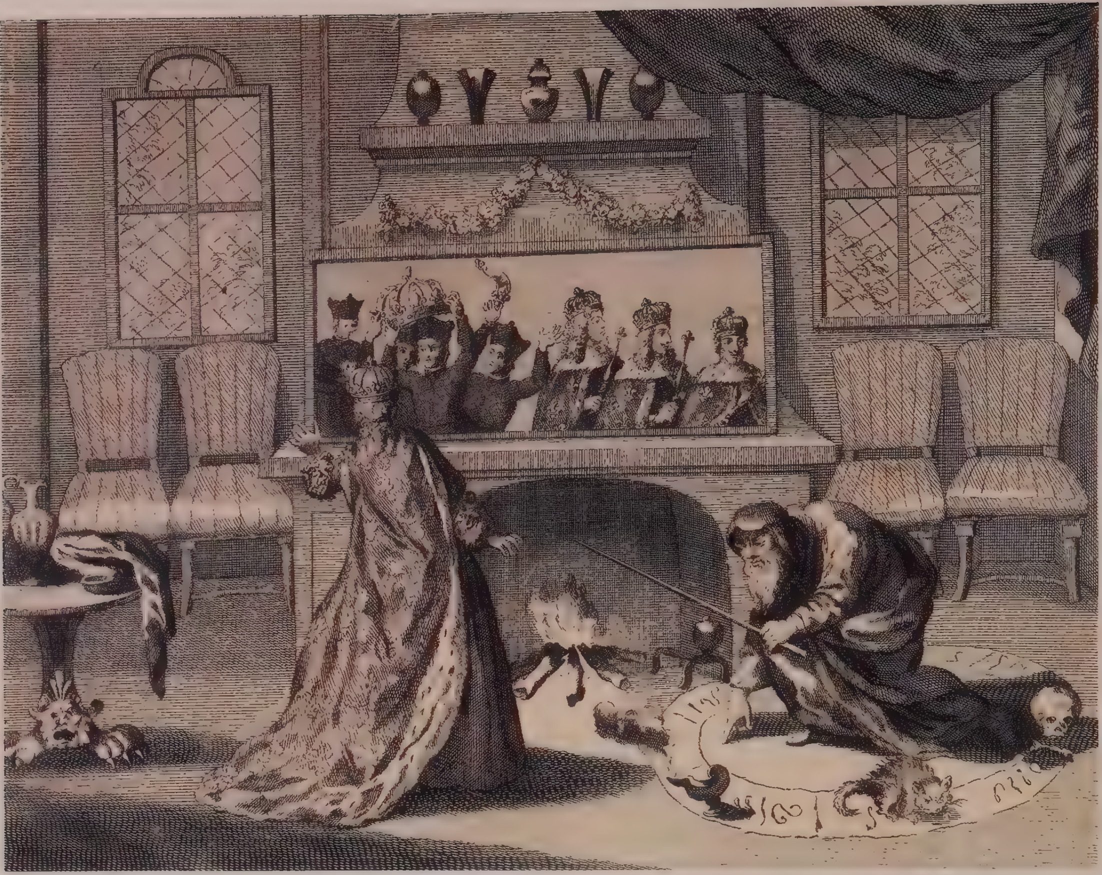
RIGHT: **early 18th century** This Dutch engraving portrays a group of fairground entertainers—before magicians were seen in theaters, they were usually seen in these settings. Here the magician stands at the left, behind his table. Although he is juggling two balls, we can identify him as a magician because he wears a *gibecière*, the distinctive performer's apron. The other performers include a water-spouter, right of the magician, acrobats, center, and a fire-eater, far right.

Saturated by the Supernatural

According to historian Montague Summers, the Elizabethan age was "saturated by the supernatural," and "witchcraft in particular was not merely a matter for speculation, but it was a dangerous charge ... an offense which, although yet argued and even disputed carried in generality the penalty of death." A skillful traveling magician could deftly avoid the charge by emphasizing entertainment, but others played a dangerous game by relying on the audience's superstitions. In 1584, less than 150 years after Gutenberg's invention of the printing press, the first French book was published on conjuring, J. Prevost's *Les subtiles et plaisantes inventions* (Clever and pleasant inventions). Prevost provides a primer on magic, and warns of overreaching magicians: "I have seen over many years now, in all the best cities of our good France, the simple and rustic commoner utterly charmed and bewitched by the heap of charlatans that do overrun our country... These [magicians] couch in words of outlandish gibberish ... they deem themselves superintendents not only of Lucifer, Astaroth, Beelzebub, and their servants, but also of the legions of Hell, with absolute power and masterful authority, having found a most favorable subject for all their shocking offenses, which is ignorance, the mother of error."

That same year saw the first English book on conjuring, Reginald Scot's *The Discoverie of Witchcraft.* Within its covers, it demonstrates the conflicts and confusion over Elizabethan magic. Scot adopts an even more enlightened approach than Prevost, discounting witchcraft by exposing the foolishness of the spells, and demonstrating the cleverness of sleight of hand. Scot goes on to describe dozens of wonderful effects, including some with special apparatus, such as how "to cut off one's head and to lay it in a platter ... which the jugglers call the decollation of John [the] Baptist." Scot's account might have been inspired by one of the religious spectacles of the Middle Ages, but it also reminds us of Djedi's command appearance before the pharaoh.

The next king of England, James I, was crowned in 1601. He was a believer in witchcraft, having written his own *Demonology* in 1597. He also commissioned the famous King James Version of the Bible, which includes the phrase (loosely translated, scholars note, to favor James's own prejudices), "Thou shall not suffer a witch to live." With James on the throne, Reginald Scot's book was suddenly at odds with the king's superstitious views. There's a romantic myth that when James became king *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* was banned, and all available copies collected



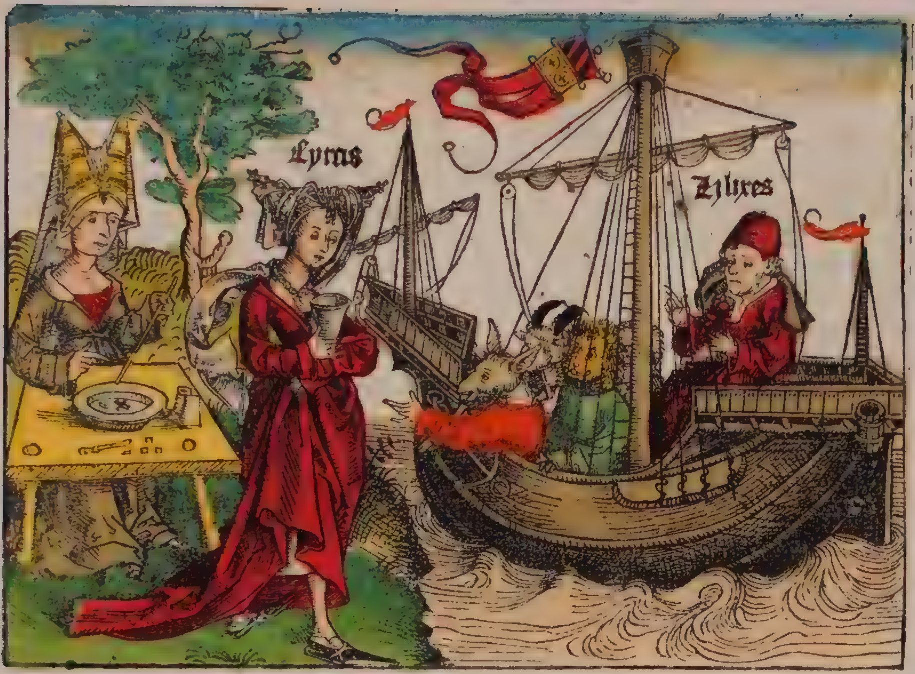
and burned. Although local officials may have consigned some copies to flames, the ban was likely an exaggeration. Scholars now accept that a well-thumbed edition of Scot was in Shakespeare's library, and the masterful incantations of witches and soothsayers in Shakespeare's later plays—composed to please the new king—had been inspired by Scot's book.

The Origins of Hocus Pocus

"Hocus Pocus," which today is a generic magic phrase, was originally the stage name of an English magician from the early 1600s, William Vincent. Like some magicians throughout history, Vincent was not averse to using his skills in less artistic ways. In 1625, he was accused of cheating an associate during a game, according to London legal records, "playing at tables ... and betting with them." Hocus Pocus was mentioned in several works by playwright Ben Jonson, and inspired an important book on magical techniques, *Hocus Pocus Junior*, published anonymously in 1634. A 17th-century Catholic author believed the name was a deliberate corruption of a phrase from the Latin sacrament, *Hoc est enim Corpus meum* ("For this is my body"), the "magic words" spoken by the priest as the wafer transforms into the body of Christ. True or false, the criticism demonstrates that the church was still mistrustful of street magicians: even their nonsensical words might be subversive.

Isaac Fawkes performed at fairgrounds and theaters around London through the 1720s (p. 108). His specialty was a trick with a large cloth bag. He turned the bag inside out, showing it empty, then pulled a dozen eggs from inside. He was also adept at coin and card tricks, although he employed many features for the public, including acrobats, contortionists, and clockwork devices, such as a tree that appeared to grow and bear fruit in a minute. Like many performers at the time, Fawkes used exaggerations in playbills or newspaper advertisements to attract a crowd.

ABOVE: **ca. 1555** Summoned by Catherine de Medici, the soothsayer Nostradamus uses a magic mirror to predict the future of the French royal family. Eager to associate with the mysterious arts, magicians later appropriated symbols and images of fortune-tellers, such as the magic circle, at the right, which Nostradamus uses to cast his spell.

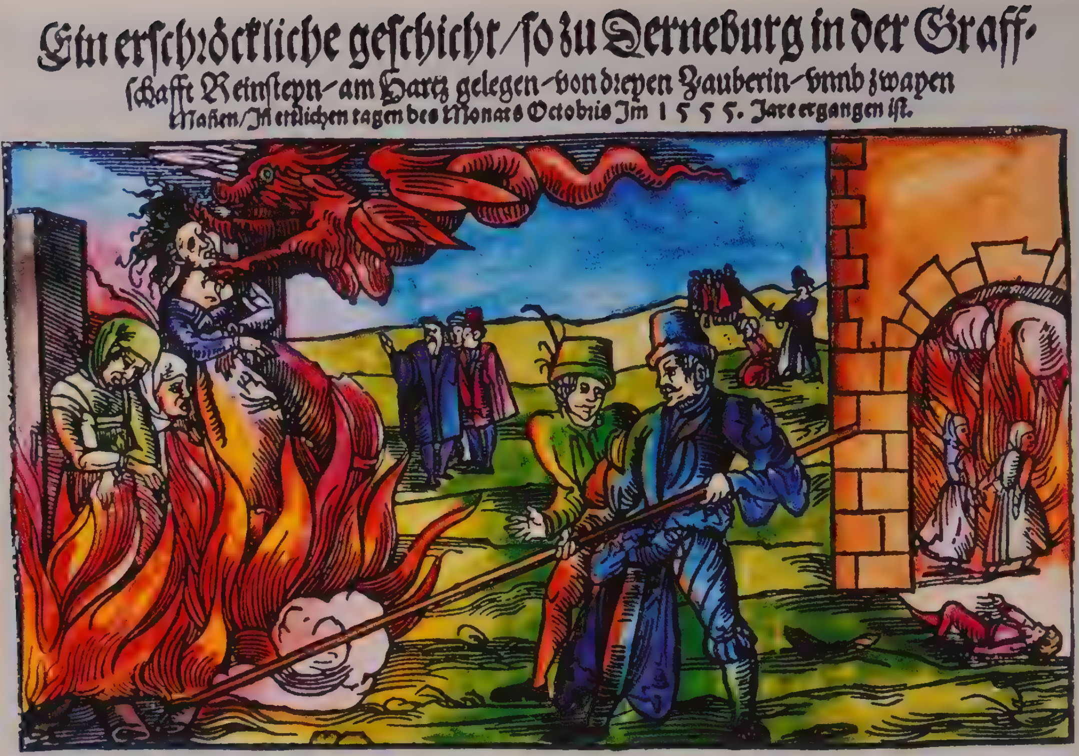


ABOVE: **1493** An illustration from German historian Hartmann Schedel's *Nuremberg Chronicle* shows the legendary Greek sorceress Circe enchanting Ulysses's crew. The artist portrayed Circe with cups, balls, and dice, so that a 15th-century reader understood that she was not merely a witch, but a master of trickery.

He offered such enticing demonstrations as "the Italian Scaramouche, who dances with two heads, four legs, and but one body." These printed boasts were typical, but on January 11, 1749, an amazing advertisement appeared in the London *General Advertiser*. A nameless conjurer, the ad promised, would take the stage at the Haymarket Theatre on January 16 and perform a series of wonders. "He presents you with a common wine bottle, which any of the spectators may examine. This bottle is placed on a table in the middle of the stage and he (without any equivocation) goes into it, in the sight of all the spectators, and sings in it." An overflow crowd arrived at the Haymarket to see the so-called Bottle Conjurer, tickets were sold at premium prices, and the audience waited for the show (p. 109). Half an hour after the announced time, as the crowd stomped and shouted with impatience, a theater manager took the stage to apologize. One spectator in the pit called out, "For double the price, the conjurer will get into a pint bottle." With the joke, the spectators realized they'd been duped. The crowd rioted, storming the exits, ripping apart furniture and scenery, and piling it into a bonfire outside the Haymarket. There never was a Bottle Conjurer; the hoax was probably the work of a nobleman wishing to test the public's gullibility.

Modernizing the Art of Magic

Chevalier Pinetti may have been the master of such braggadocio. He was born Giuseppe Merci in Tuscany, Italy, around 1750, and became the best-known performer of his generation (p. 114). A friend of Pinetti's once wrote, "There never was a man who carried further the art of the charlatan. He appeared onstage in rich suits embroidered in gold, which he changed three or four times during the evening, including the uniform of a general, and he decked himself with numerous medals and decorations of all nations." Pinetti exhibited a number of elaborate clockwork automata, and introduced Second Sight, a mind-reading feat in which his wife was blindfolded onstage and seemingly read the minds of the audience. Pinetti's magic inspired the book *La magie blanche dévoilée* (White magic explained) by Henri Decremps, a Parisian lawyer and amateur magician. Decremps's book provides a snapshot of magic at the end of the 18th century, listing nine rules that should be followed by successful magicians. Rule seven urges magicians to modernize their art: "Do not claim supernatural powers when performing to educated people." Presumably, the devil, or a dose of the old mysticism, was still acceptable for the common rabble.


Ein erſchröckliche geſchicht/ſo zu Derneburg in der Graff-
ſchafft Reinſteyn- am Hartz gelegen- von dreyen Zauberin- vnnd zwayen
Mañen/In etlichen tagen des Monats Octobris Im 1555. Jare ergangen iſt.

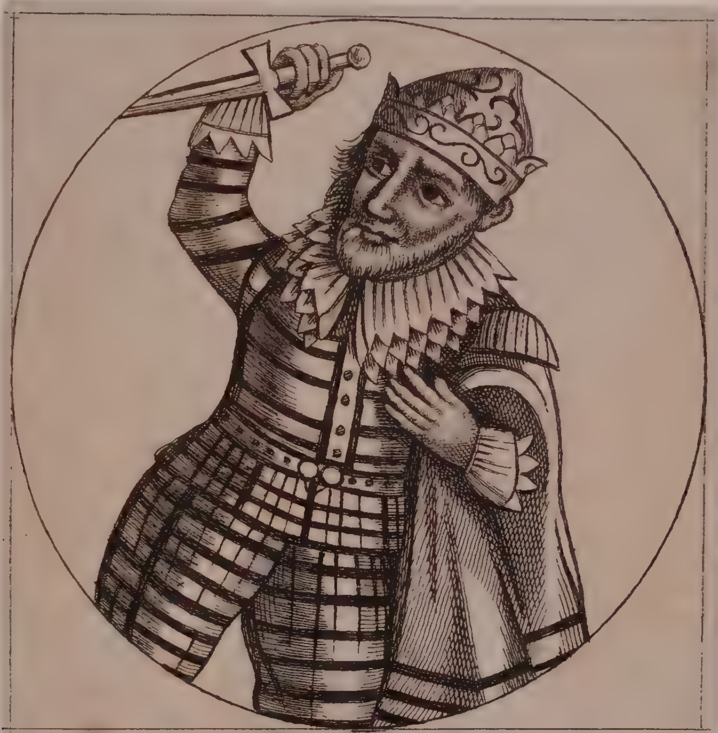
Italy produced another famous magician, Bartolomeo Bosco, who was born in Turin in 1793. His sleight-of-hand training served him well when, as a young man, he was drafted into Napoleon's army. In the Battle of Borodino, Bosco was wounded by a lance and collapsed to the ground. As he lay suffering, he observed a Cossack soldier tramping over the battlefield, pilfering money and jewelry from the corpses. Bosco calculated that it was safest to play dead. As the soldier arrived and bent over him to search his pockets, Bosco used his pickpocketing skills to steal back the treasures that the Cossack had just stolen.

Bosco eventually became a star throughout Europe, and performed before Marie Louise, the widow of Napoleon, in 1836. Onstage, Bosco could appear unimpressive—he was stocky and his gestures could be overly dramatic. But his magic was simple and exquisite, confirming Houdini's adage that "It's not the trick, it's the magician." When Bosco appeared onstage in Paris, he began his performance with an imposing ritual, marching silently toward a large copper ball that hung over the stage, polishing his wand, and using it to strike the ball three times, so that it rang like a bell. "*Spiriti mei infernali, obedite*," he intoned gravely. ("My infernal spirits, obey.") He then walked to a table and performed the classic Cups and Balls, turning this old fairground staple into a masterful work of theatrics (p. 115).

As magic entered the theater and became modern, safe, and sophisticated, many magicians continued to suggest a connection with the supernatural. In the late 1800s, brothers Carl and Alexander Herrmann had separate careers as magicians in Europe and America. Both were tall and thin; they trimmed their thick black hair and grew prominent goatees to resemble the devil Mephistopheles, as he'd been depicted in art and literature. Alexander Herrmann's successor in America, Harry Kellar, had a friendly face and an avuncular manner, but he also followed the Herrmann brothers' fashion and suggested devilish powers in performance. Some of Kellar's posters included little red devils sitting on the magician's shoulder, whispering secrets into his ear; others portrayed him toasting the Devil, or strolling through the woods with Devils hiding behind him (p. 119). Twentieth-century magicians like Howard Thurston, Dante, Charles Morritt, Charles Carter, and Harry Blackstone also incorporated the Devil in their advertising (pp. 120–125).

The Devil even made it onto the stage. Servais Le Roy, a Belgian magician who was popular in vaudeville, appeared early in his career in a red skullcap, billed as

RIGHT: 1823 John Lambe was a tragic victim of the superstition surrounding witchcraft. An early 17th-century London fortune-teller, conjurer, and quack doctor, Lambe was suspected of ties to the Devil. As charges grew against him, a crowd took the law into their own hands, stoning him in 1628.

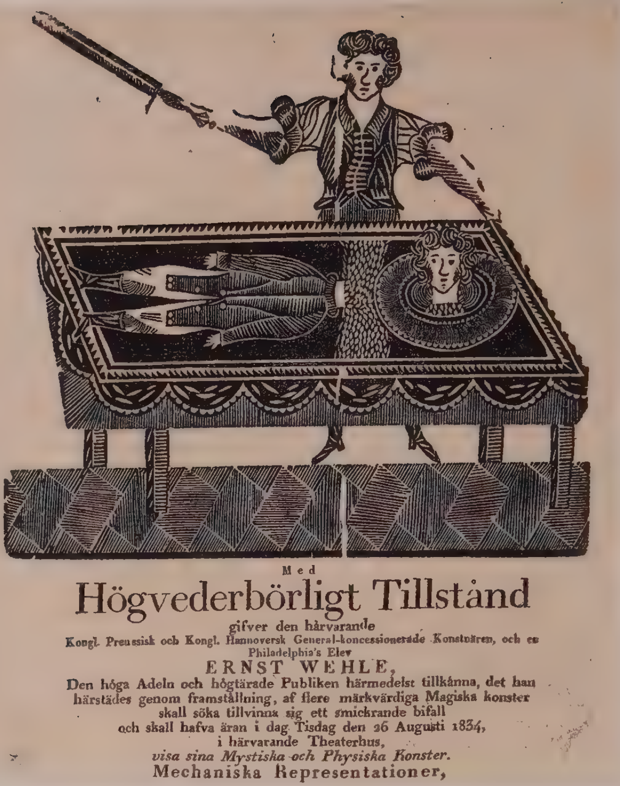


John Lambe, alias Dr. Lambe,
A Quack and reputed Conjuror;
Killed in the Streets of London by a Mob.
Published by J. Caulfield, 1823.

the Devil in Evening Clothes (p. 123); British magician David Devant conjured images from a tall glass mirror, and climaxed the illusion by producing the Devil (p. 122); and American Howard Thurston made the Devil appear from a small square chest, an illusion that he called the Million Dollar Mystery (pp. 300–301). Perhaps old habits die hard, and these magicians have felt connected to their heritage, when the Devil was an assumed costar in many ancient magic performances. The shaman, we are told, has descended into hell and returned to our world, reborn. A smiling, subservient devil is a powerful image: the ancient force of evil, civilized and transformed into a servant for good—once a threat, now eager to please. "My infernal spirits, obey." It is the perfect analogy for the world's greatest magicians.

OPPOSITE: 1555 To a gullible public, any kind of fortune-telling or conjuring trick could be ascribed to witchcraft. This luridly tinted woodcut dramatizes the burning of three suspected witches in Derneburg, Germany. As the witches burn, a demon escapes the flames with their souls.

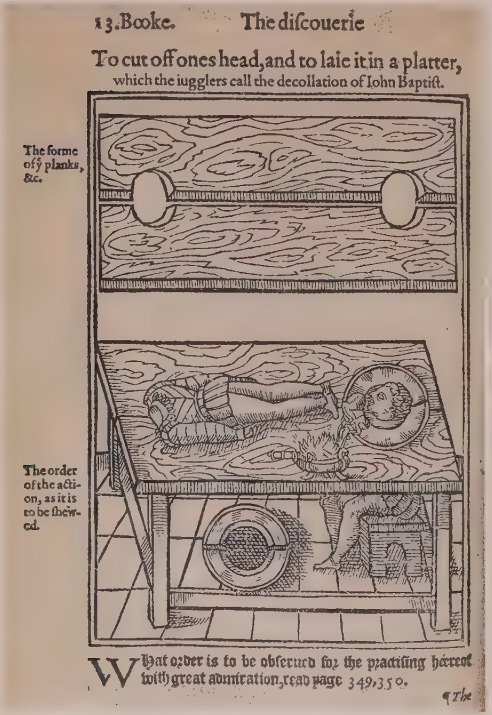
RIGHT: 1834 Ernst Wehle was a German magician who was a student of Jacob Philadelphia, a popular American-born magician who later performed in Europe. On this Swedish bill, Wehle advertises his decapitation trick, still popular two and a half centuries after Reginald Scot's book on witchcraft. Notice the addition of blood across the table, adding a horrific reality to the trick.



Med

Högvederbörligt Tillstånd

gifver den hårvarande
Kongl. Preussisk och Kongl. Hannoversk General-koncessionerade Konstnären, och en
Philadelphia's Elev
ERNST WEHLE,
Den höga Adeln och högtärade Publiken härmedelst tillkånna, det han
härstädes genom framställning, af flere märkvärdiga Magiska konster
skall söka tillvinna sig ett smickrande bifall
och skall hafva äran i dag Tisdag den 26 Augusti 1834,
i härvarande Theaterhus,
visa sina Mystiska och Physiska Konster.
Mechaniska Representationer,



13.Booke. The diſcouerie

To cut off ones head, and to laie it in a platter,
which the iugglers call the decollation of Iohn Baptiſt.

The forme of ye planks, &c.

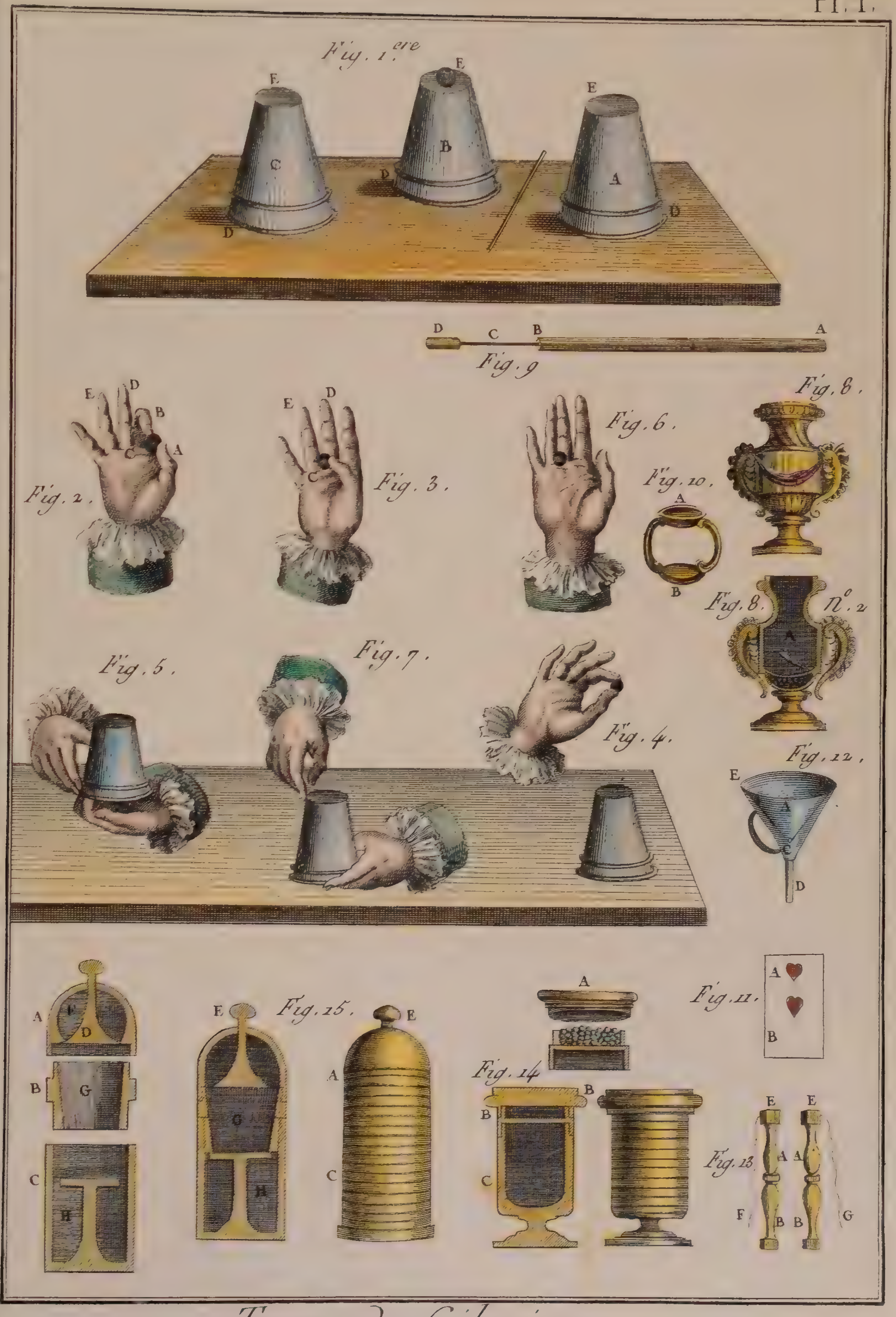
The order of the action, as it is to be ſhewed.

What oꝛder is to be obſerued foꝛ the pꝛactiſing hereof with great admiration, read page 349,350.

¶ The

LEFT: 1584 This engraved illustration from Reginald Scot's *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* exposes the secret used by performers to reenact the beheading of John the Baptist. Two actors accomplished the trick by taking their positions above and beneath the table.

OPPOSITE: 1792 This hand-colored plate from the French book *Dictionnaire encyclopédique des amusements des sciences mathématiques et physiques* shows magicians' sleight-of-hand techniques next to turned-wood vases made with secret compartments. This was the book that was mistakenly given to a young student of watchmaking, Jean Eugène Robert-Houdin. It proved a fortuitous inspiration. Robert-Houdin became France's greatest magician, and his successful career and wonderful innovations inspired a century of great performers.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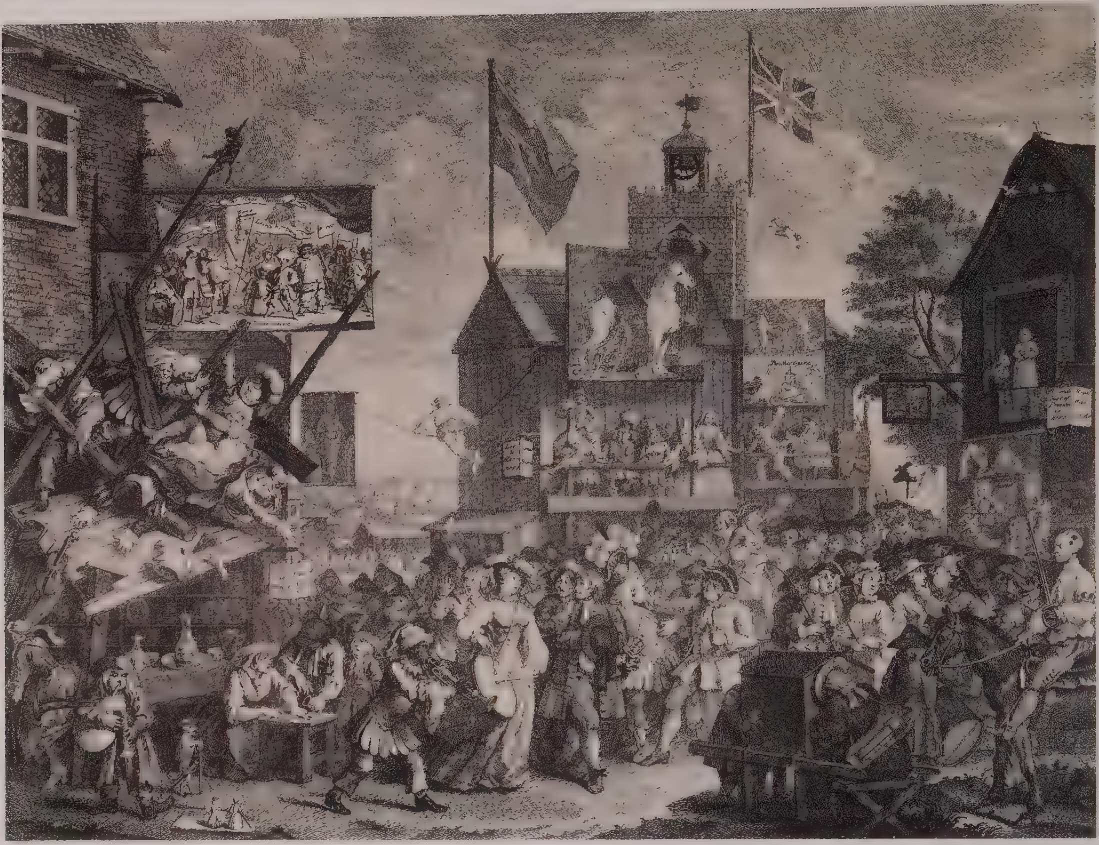
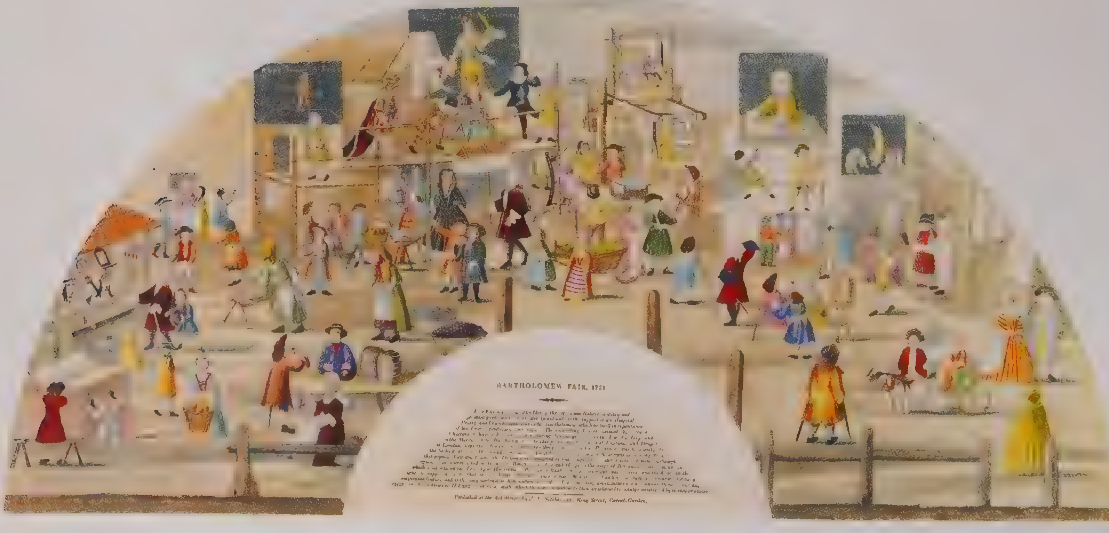
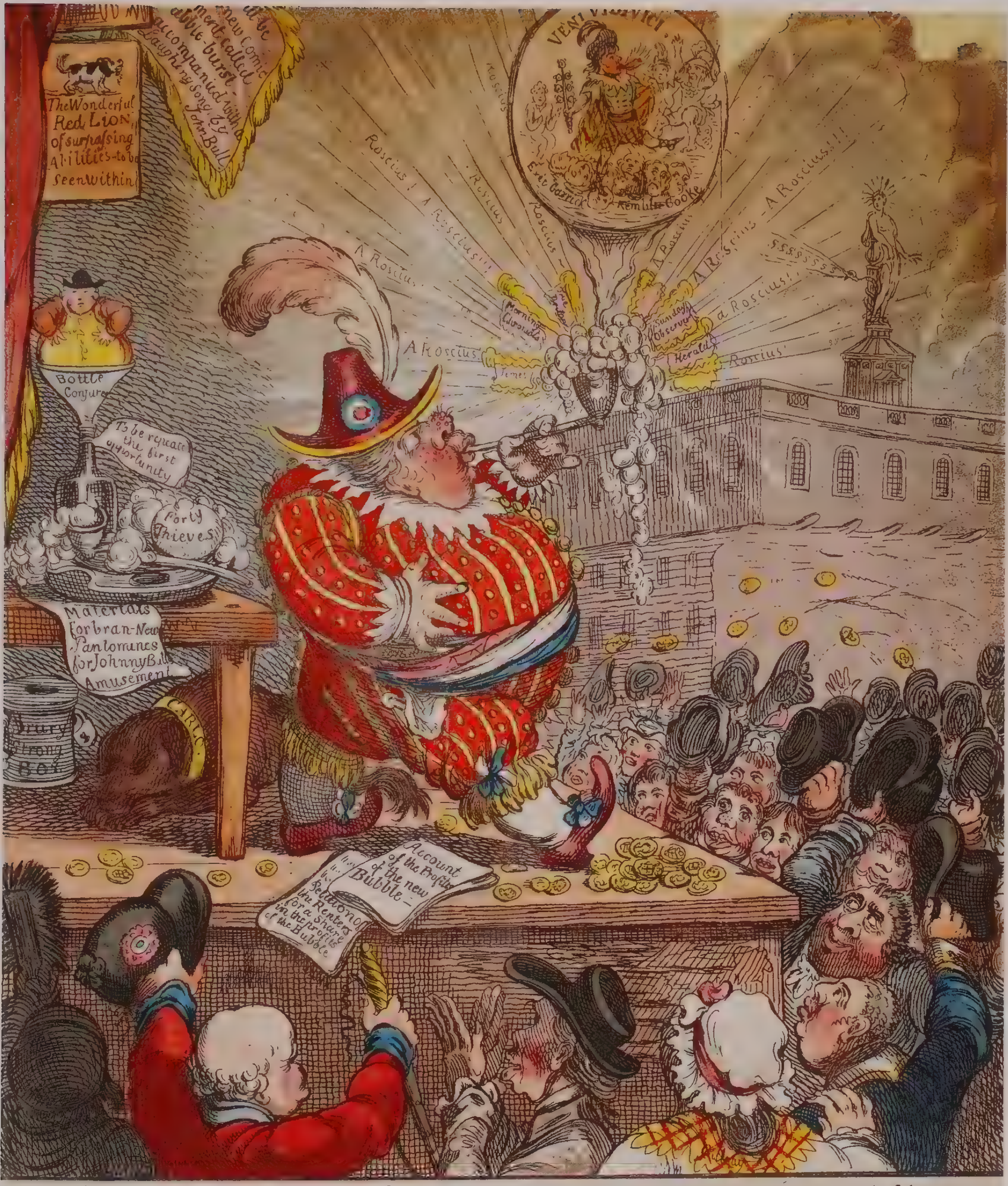
Tours de Gibeciere.



ABOVE: 1733 Isaac Fawkes was a British sleight-of-hand magician popular at fairgrounds. One of his popular tricks was producing many eggs (and later a bird) from an empty cloth bag. This William Hogarth print of Southwark Fair was produced two years after Isaac Fawkes's death, but Fawkes's son, at the far right, performs his father's bird trick.

BELOW: 1824 This hand-colored aquatint for a paper fan portrays Bartholomew Fair, London, in 1721. A large banner in the top right corner advertises one of the fair's star attractions, Isaac Fawkes (here spelled Faux). A trumpeter announces the show; a harlequin points to his portrait. Beneath the banner, a ticket is sold for the performance. The smaller banner to the right shows Fawkes's "posture makers," or contortionists.

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accompanied with a
Laughing Song, by
John Bull
The Wonderful
Red Lion
of surpassing
Abilities-to be
seen within
Bottle
Conjurer
To be repeated
the first
opportunity
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of the Profits
of the new
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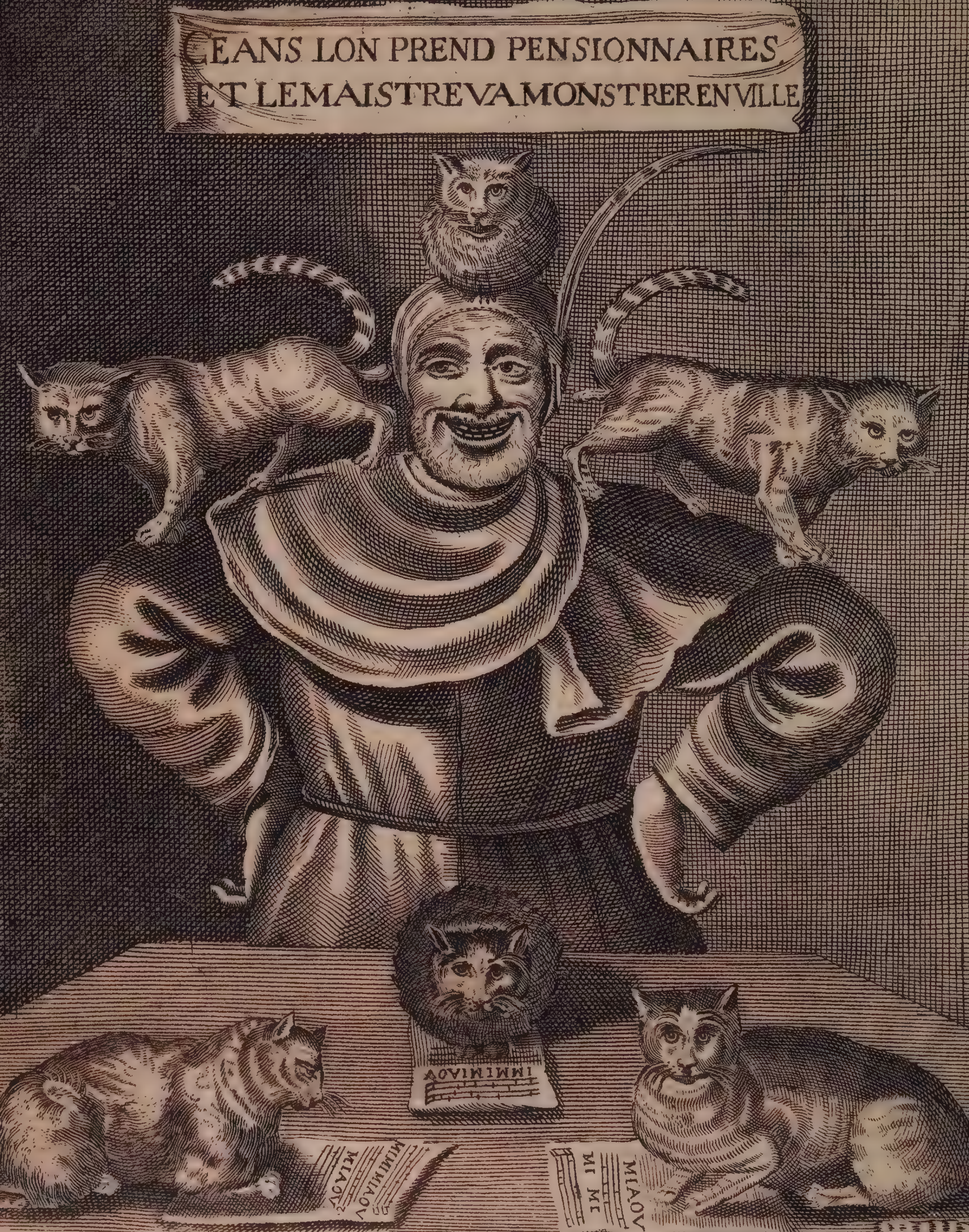
Petition of
the Renters
for a Share
in the profits
of the Bubble

The Theatrical BUBBLE;—being a new specimen of the astonishing Powers of the great Politico-Punchinello, in the Art of Dramatic Puffing—

ABOVE: **1805** A political cartoon demonstrates "dramatic puffing" with the infamous Bottle Conjurer hoax from 1749. That year, newspaper advertisements lured the gullible public to the Haymarket Theatre with promises of wonderful impossibilities, like a full-size man entering a bottle. The magician never appeared for the show. At the far left of this cartoon, the missing Bottle Conjurer enters an ordinary wine bottle, as promised.


CEANS LON PREND PENSIONNAIRES,
ET LEMAISTREVAMONSTRERENVILLE
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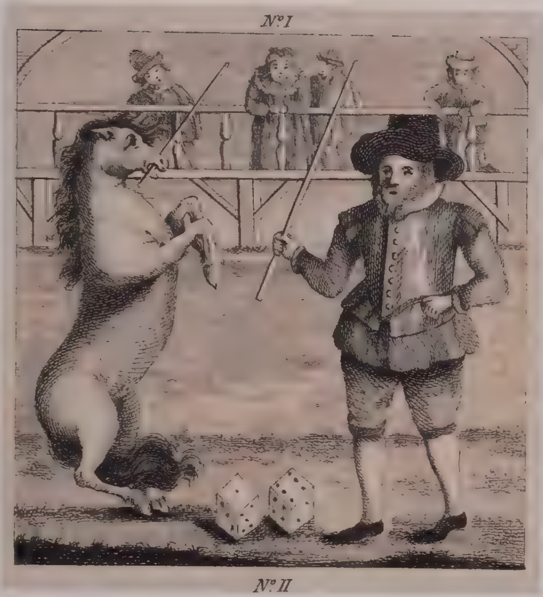
ous qui ne ſcauez pas ce que vaut la Muſique,
nez vous en ouir le concert magnifique,
les airs rauiſſans que j'aprend aux Matous;

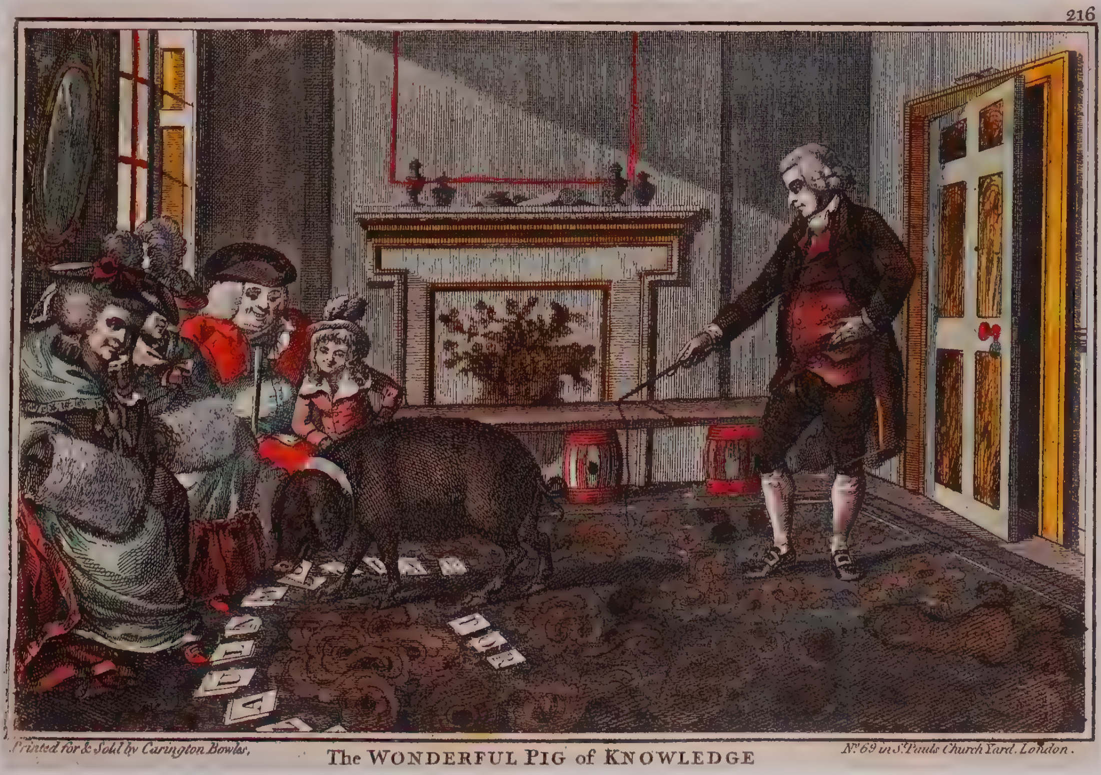
Puis que ma belle voix rend ces beſte dou
Je ne ſcaurois manquer de vous inſtruire
Ny de vous eſclairſir les notes diffic

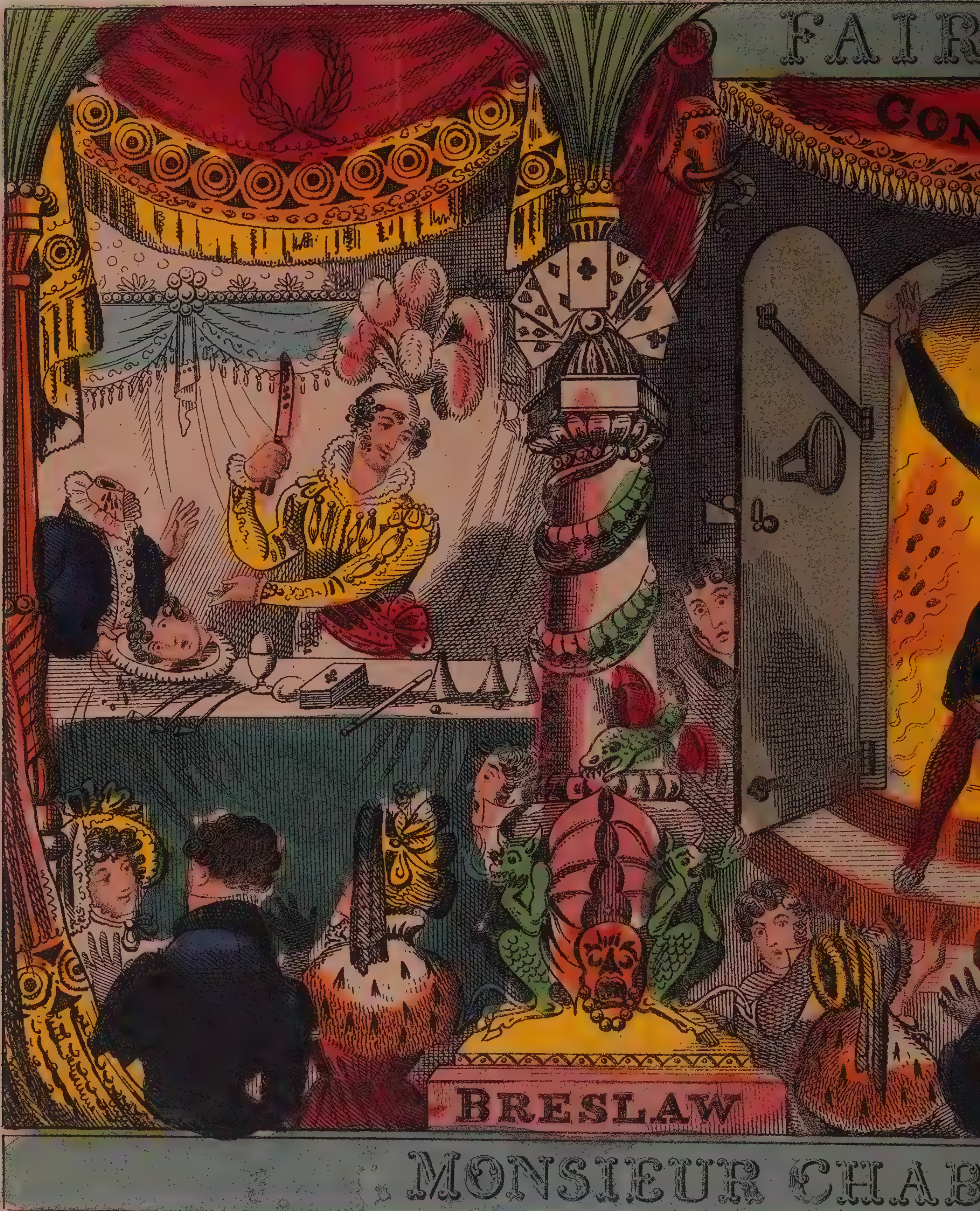


OPPOSITE: **ca. 1600** Trained-animal acts were always favorites with the public. This French performer proudly exhibited an unlikely group of tomcats. They accompanied his singing, raising their voices in perfectly pitched howls and purrs. Magicians took these acts even further, supposedly teaching animals how to read the minds of their audience.

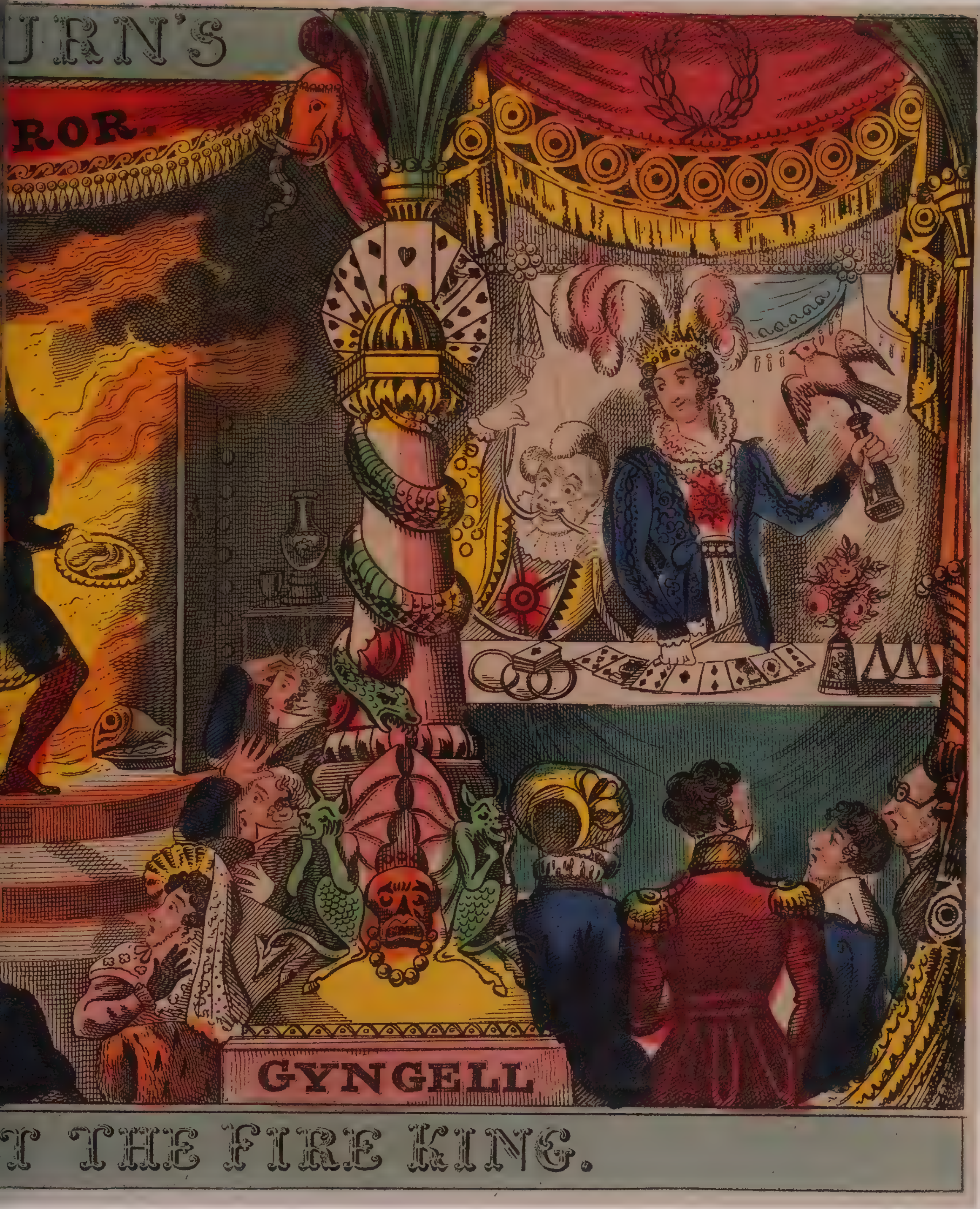
LEFT: **1785** Morocco was a famous performing horse exhibited in London in the late 16th century by a trainer named William Banks. Morocco is mentioned in Shakespeare's play *Love's Labour's Lost*. According to one anecdote, when Banks and Morocco were accused of witchcraft, Morocco dismissed the charge by kissing a crucifix.

BELOW: **1785** The Pig of Knowledge, Samuel Bisset's trained pig who could seemingly spell, tell the time, and read the minds of his audience, was exhibited in London in 1785. The poet Robert Southey claimed that the pig was "in his day a far greater object of admiration to the English nation than ever was Sir Isaac Newton."


216
Printed for & Sold by Carington Bowles,
The WONDERFUL PIG of KNOWLEDGE
Nº 69 in S.t Pauls Church Yard, London.



ABOVE: **ca. 1825** A frontispiece from John Fairburn's book explaining popular tricks, *New London Conjurer*, shows three contemporary mystery performers who performed in fairgrounds or public rooms. Breslaw was an expert at card magic; Gyngell specialized in mechanical effects and automata; Chabert, "the Fire King," entered a flaming oven carrying two raw steaks. In Ricky Jay's account of Chabert's act, he "emerged tartare—the steaks were cooked to perfection."


URN'S
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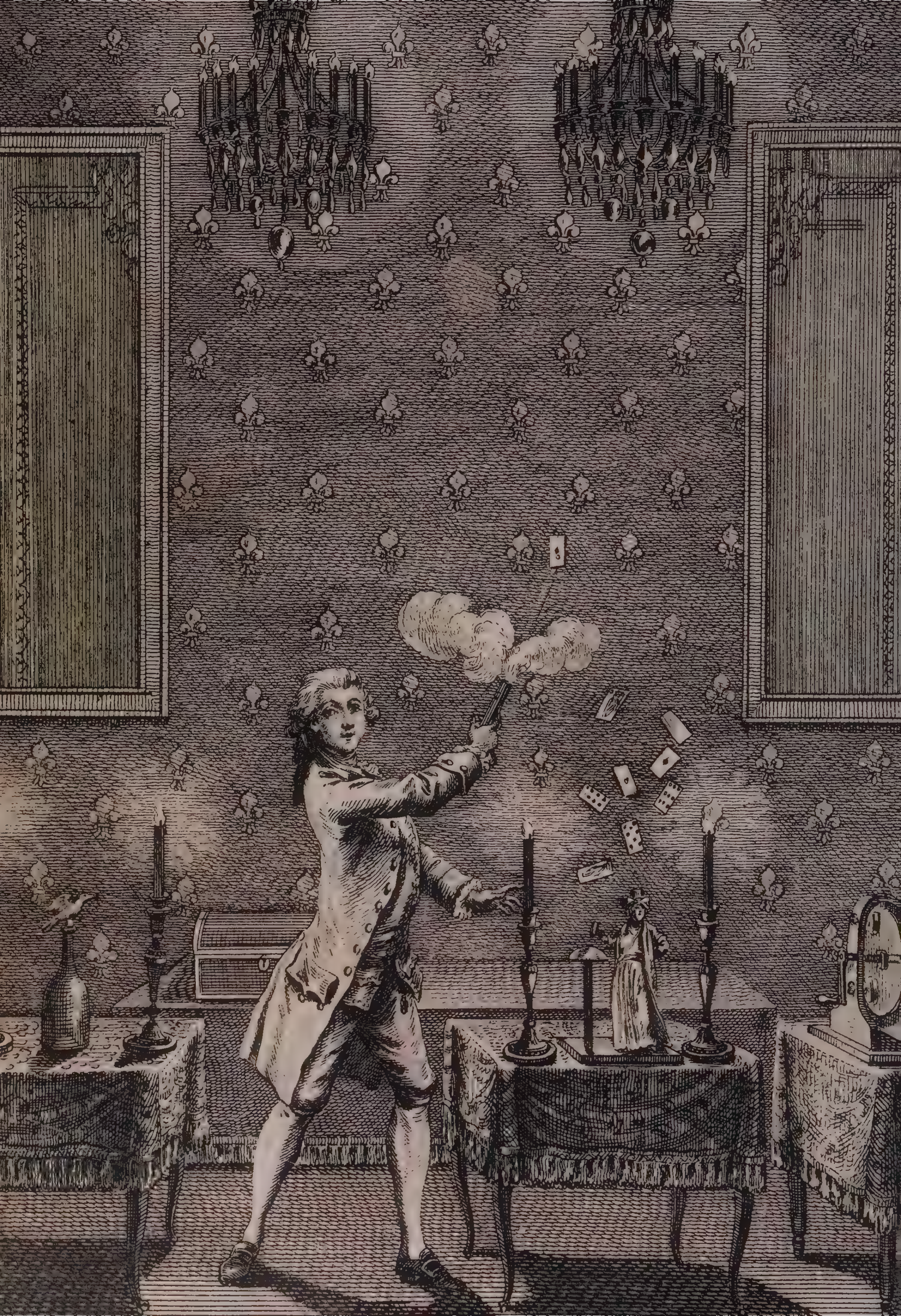
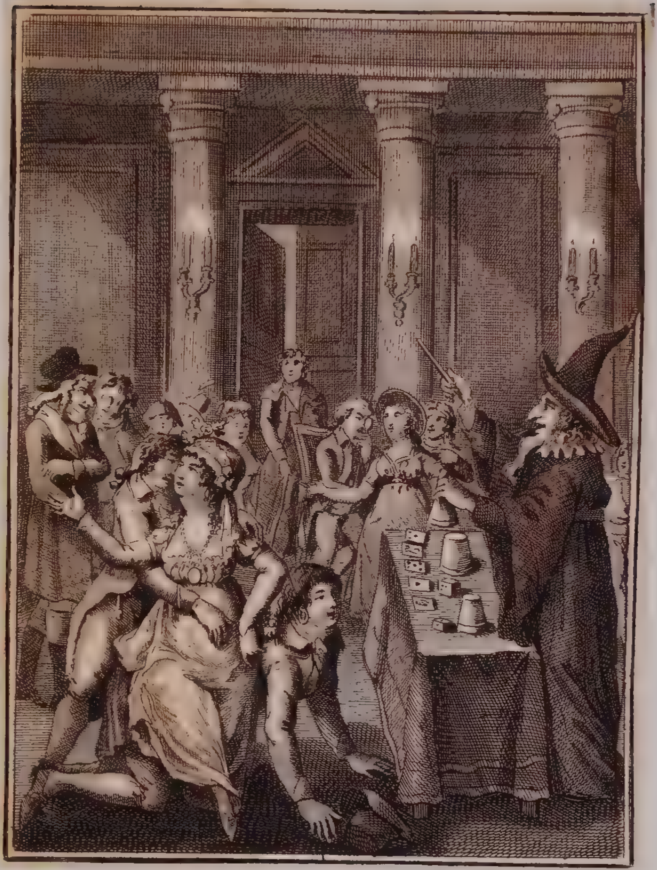


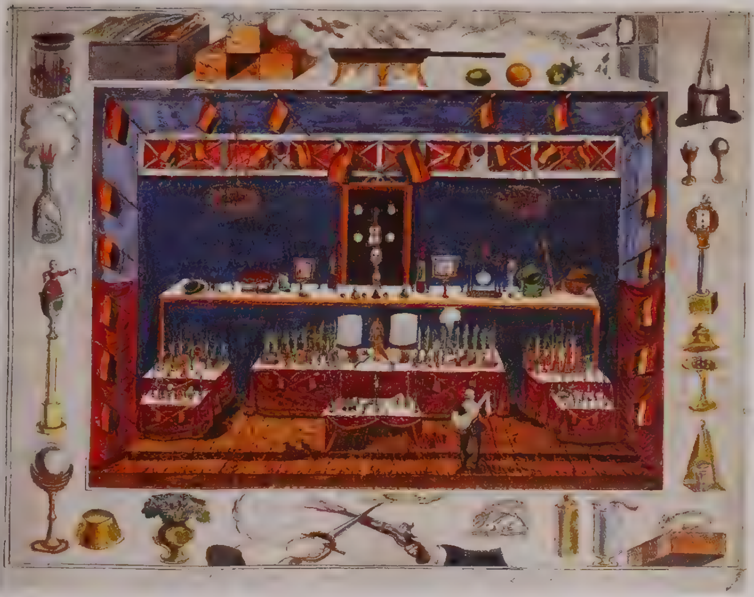
OPPOSITE: 1784 This portrait of Chevalier Pinetti appears in Henri Decremps's malicious book exposing Pinetti's secrets, *La Magie blanche dévoilée* (White magic exposed). Pinetti was a flamboyant showman known throughout Europe. Here he performs a typically sensational effect, securing a selected playing card against the wall with a single pistol shot.

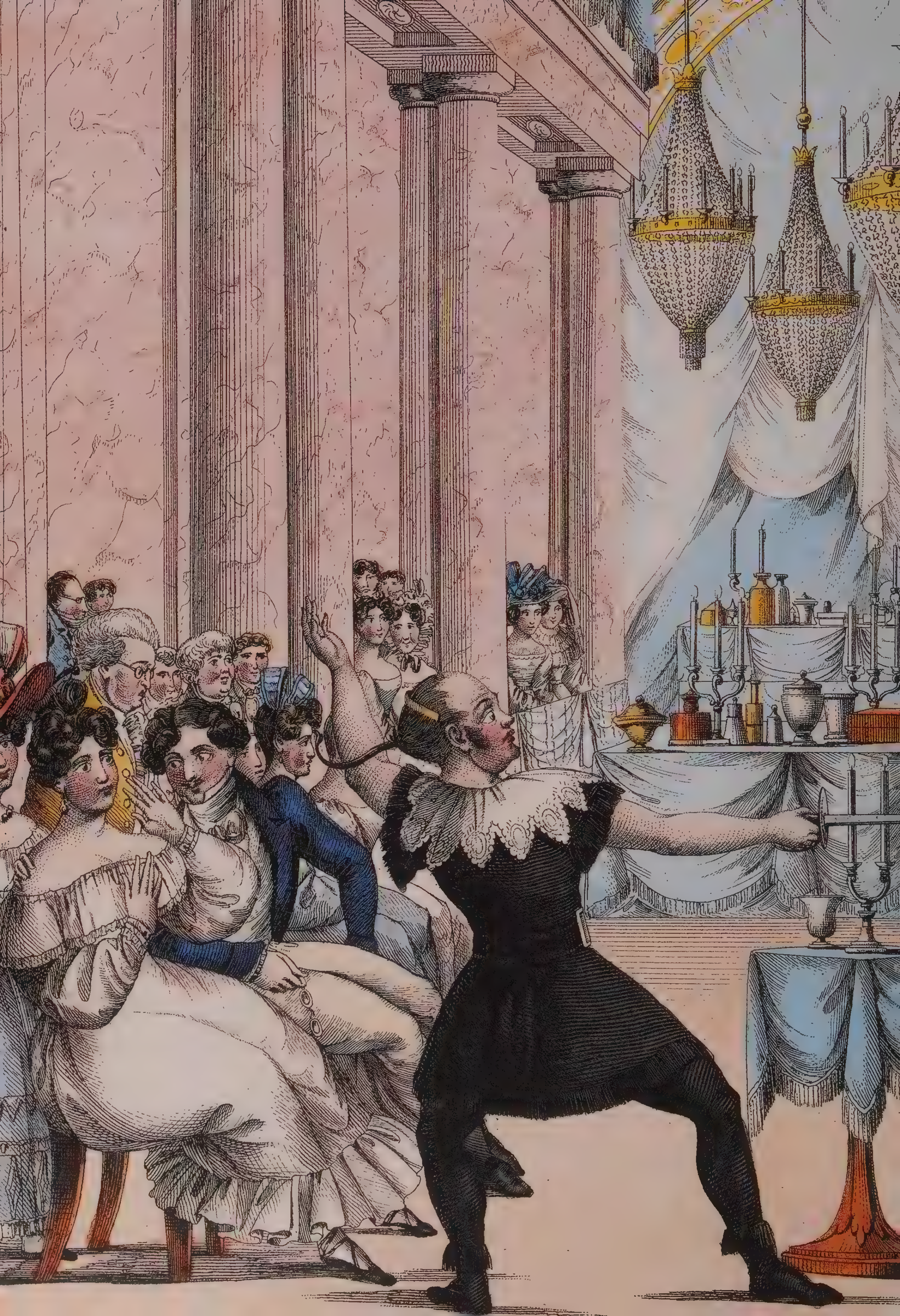
RIGHT: 1811 This engraving from the French book *Manuel de physique amusante* (Handbook of amusing physics) depicts an imaginative magic show in a private salon, with the expected three metal cups. Not only has the magician captivated his crowd, perhaps he's even put a spell on them during the course of his show, inspiring their wild antics.

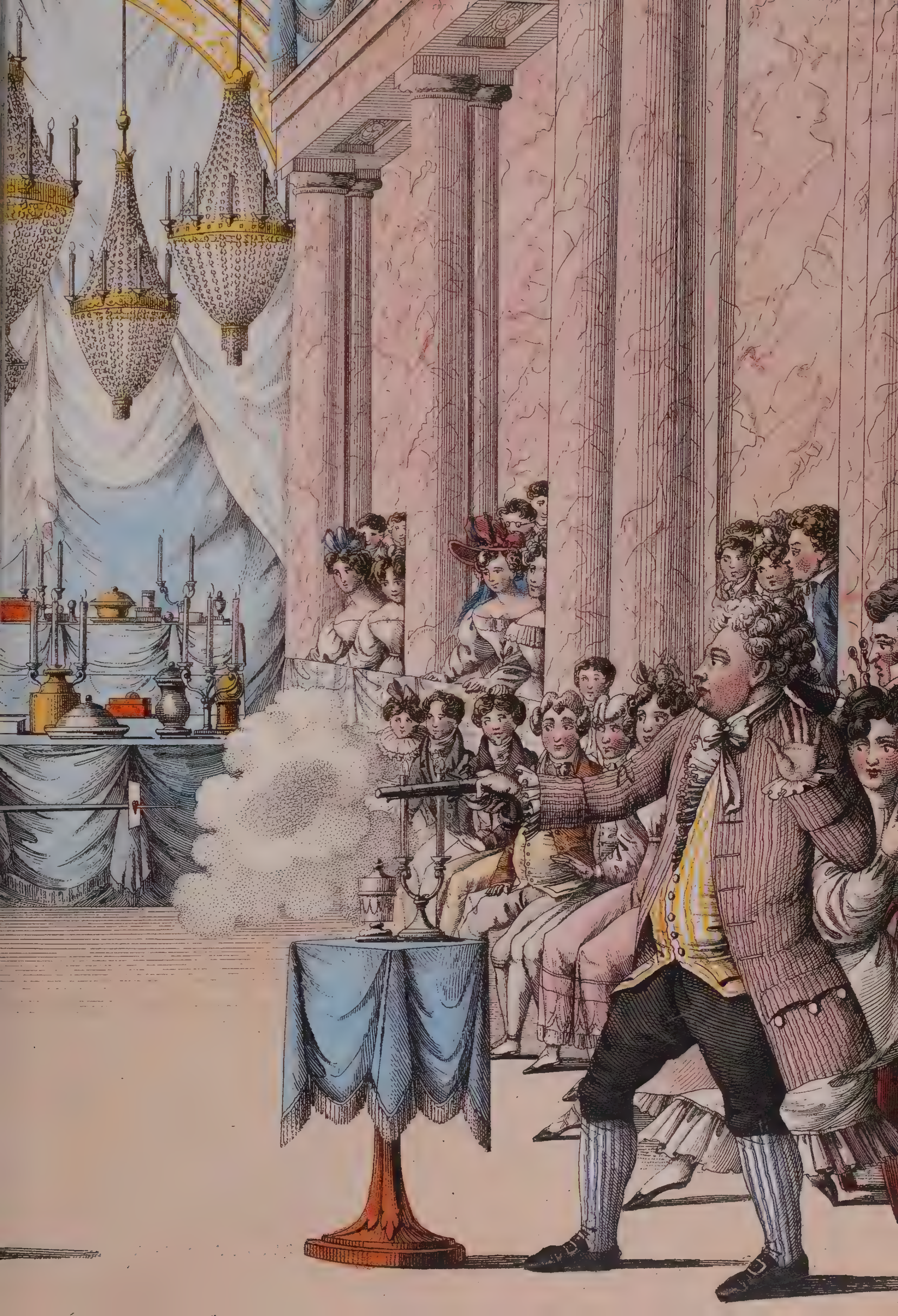
BELOW: 1848 An artist, Dr. C. Zehman, made this colorful drawing of Bartolomeo Bosco on his stage during a performance in Leipzig, Germany. It was fashionable for magicians of the mid-19th century to fill their stages with shelves of elaborate and colorful apparatus, boasting of the magician's repertoire, even if only a fraction of it was actually used in the performance.

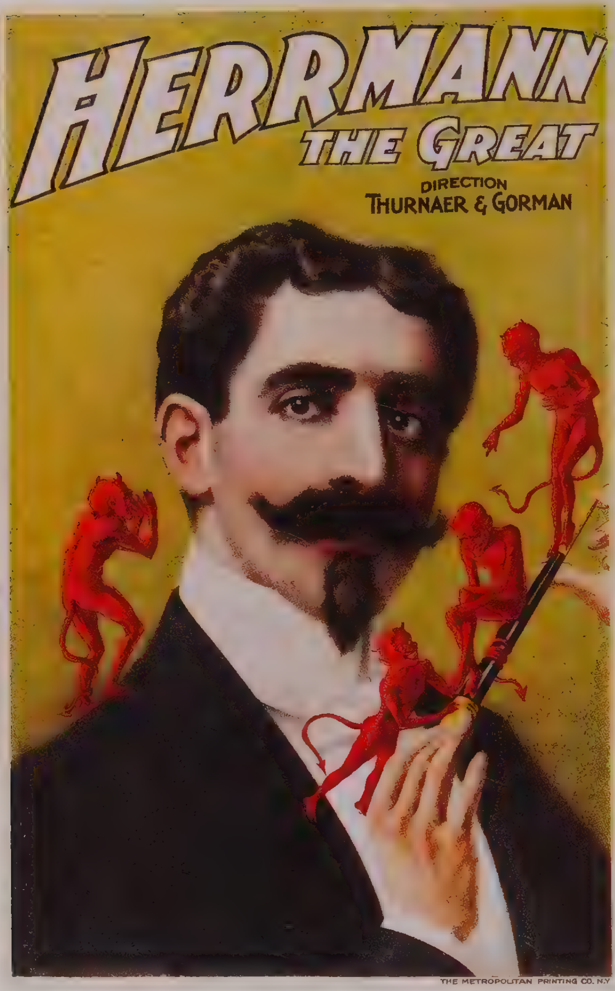
PAGES 116–117: 1828 An engraving depicts *Stabler, the Physicist*, a short play that parodied Bosco's performance. A selected card was located in an amazing way: when a pistol was fired, the magician caught a selected card on the tip of his sword. Here the actor portraying Bosco is distinctive in his black-and-lace costume.







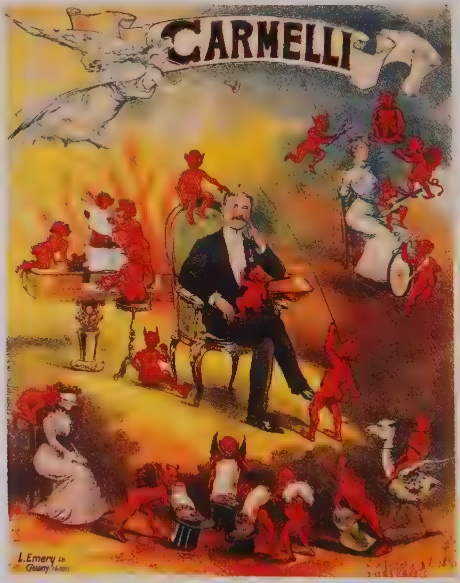


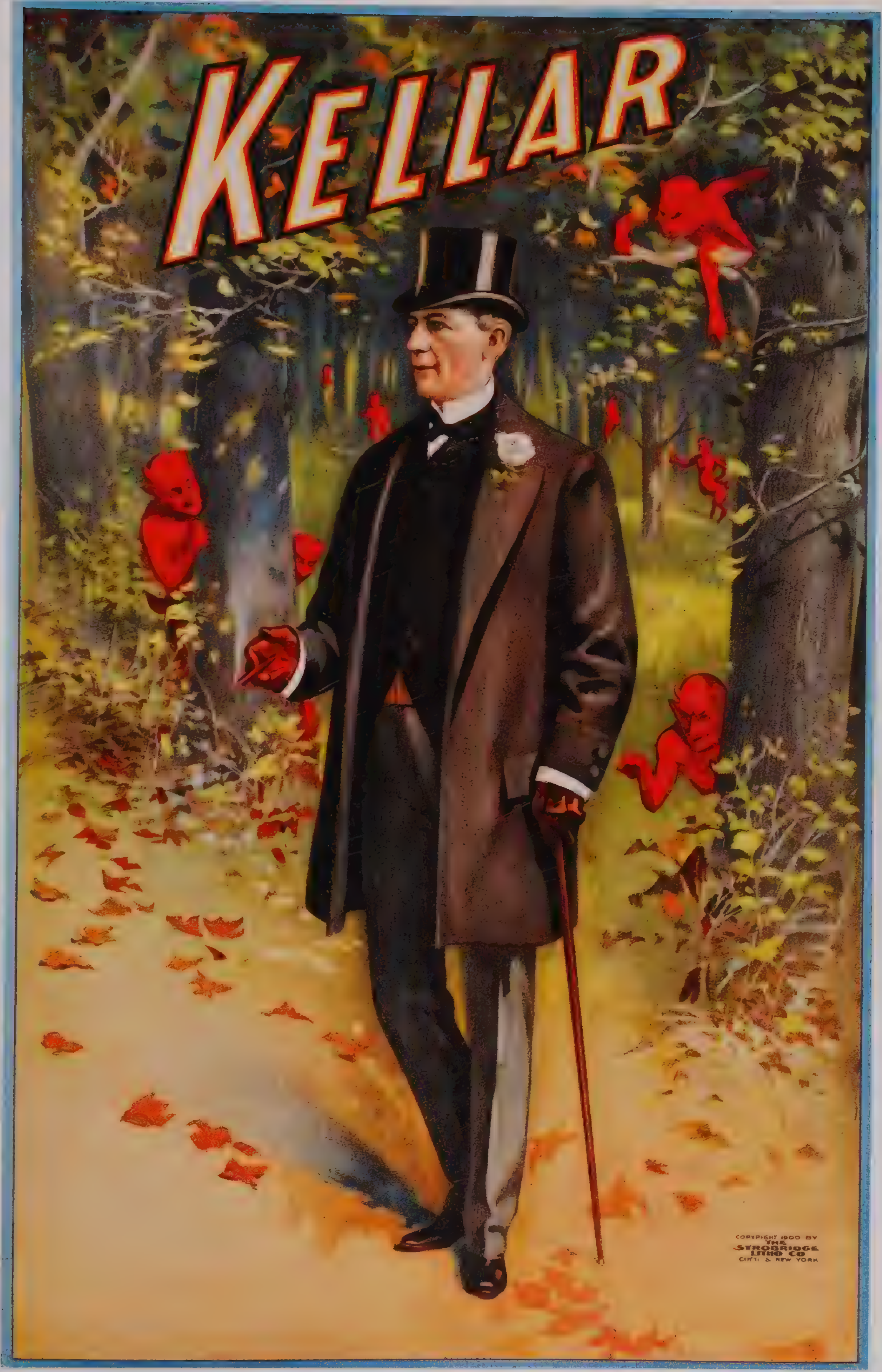


OPPOSITE: **1900** Harry Kellar, America's favorite magician for a decade, advertised his show with many beautiful, imaginative lithographic posters. In this portrait, the amiable wizard takes a walk in the woods, and is followed by a collection of devilish imps. These are not merely his companions, but hold the secrets to Kellar's amazing magic.

ABOVE: **ca. 1900** Leon Herrmann was the nephew of and successor to America's longtime favorite magician, Alexander Herrmann. Like Alexander, Leon cultivated the image of Mephistopheles, reinforced on this poster with a motif of tiny imps. These little imps were popularized on the posters of Harry Kellar in the 1890s. Here the imps dance on Herrmann's wand, as one stands on his shoulder and whispers secrets in his ear.

RIGHT: **ca. 1900** Carmelli (Auguste-Joseph Cohen) was a French magician and performer at the Theatre Robert-Houdin in Paris. An injury from the Franco-Prussian War confined his motions onstage, and he later performed seated in a chair. The comic imps who torment Carmelli's assistants, accompany his magic, and sit in his lap were inspired by Kellar's posters.

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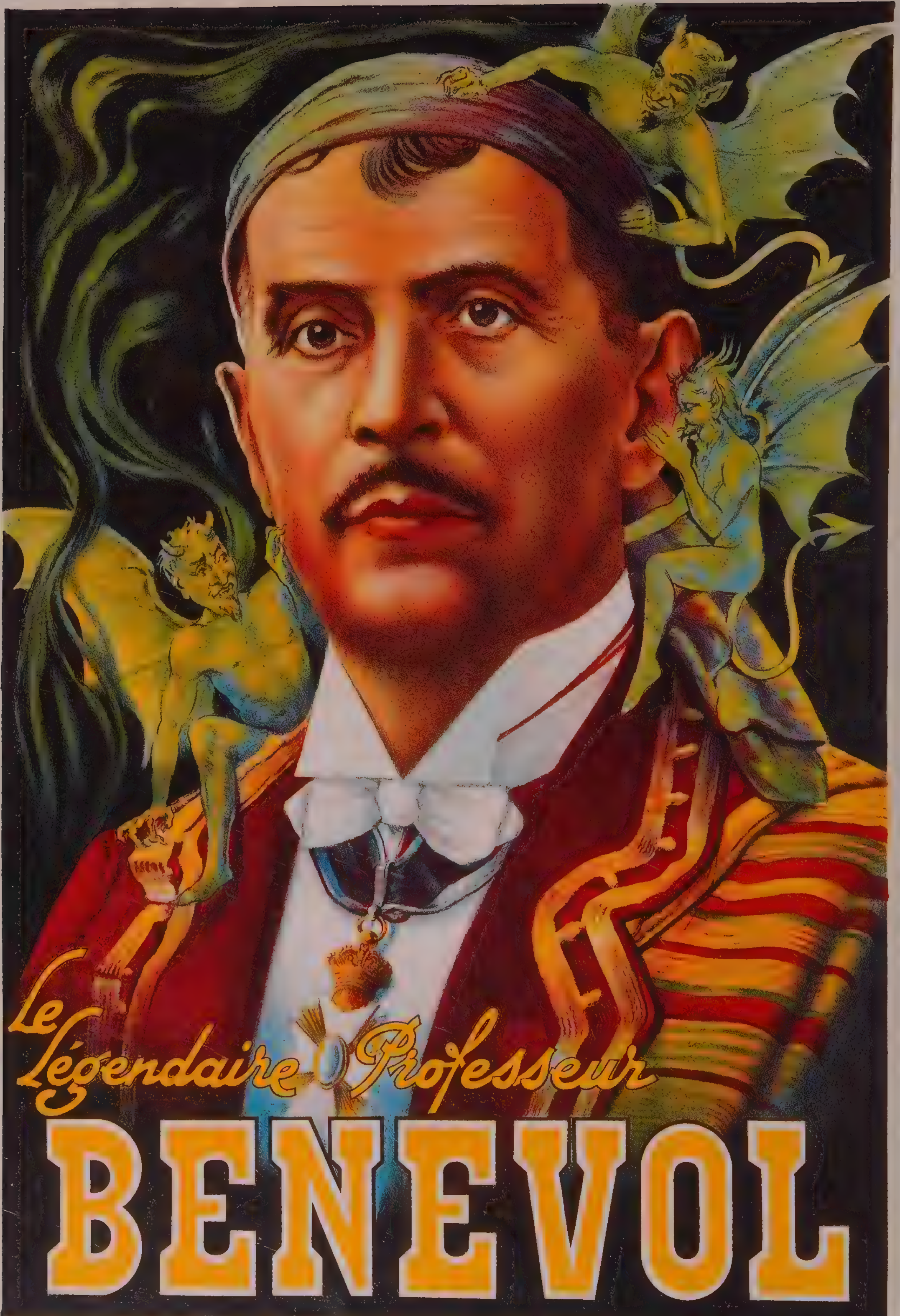
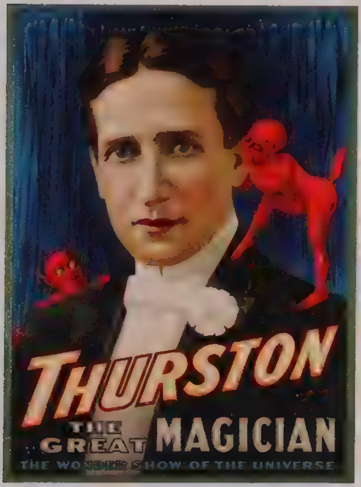

Le Légendaire Professeur
BENEVOL

OPPOSITE: **ca. 1925** Benevol (Francesco Benevolo) was an Italian-born magician who had a long, successful career in France. His poster portrait copied the popular devil motif, but Benevol's unusual winged green demons are more horrific and serious than the fat, playful imps that surrounded most magicians.

RIGHT: **ca. 1920s** Magic posters often indulged in imaginative images, but this peculiar Thurston poster is unusually lurid. Rather than show Thurston, or any of his favorite feats, the poster focuses on the purely horrific and supernatural characters to lure audiences to the theater.

BELOW: **1914 and ca. 1920** Whispering imps were popularized by the American magician Harry Kellar before the end of the 19th century. His successor, Howard Thurston, repeated these same imps on his own posters, and he was copied by Harry Blackstone. For half a century, these whispering imps were a trademark for great American magicians.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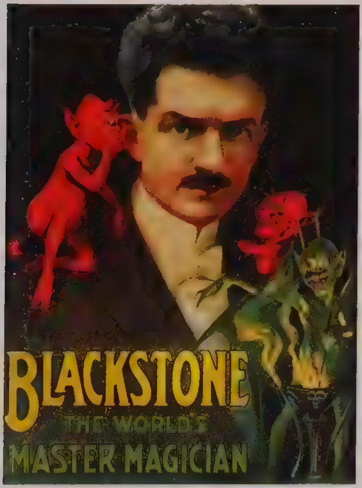
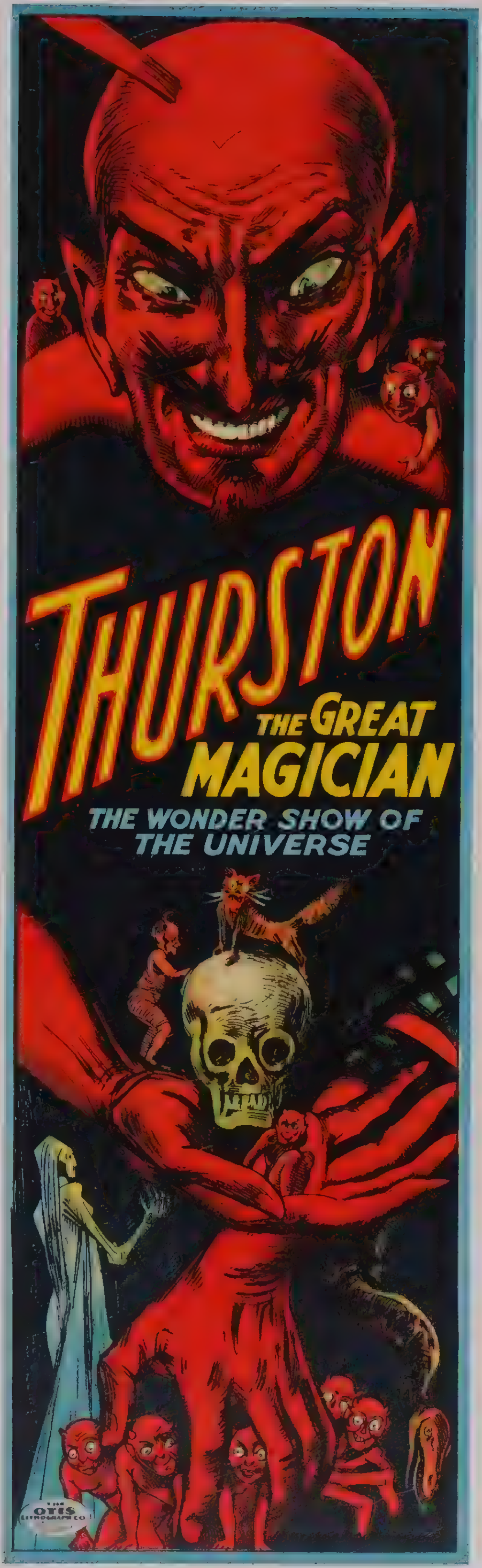
THE GREAT MAGICIAN
THE WONDER SHOW OF THE UNIVERSE

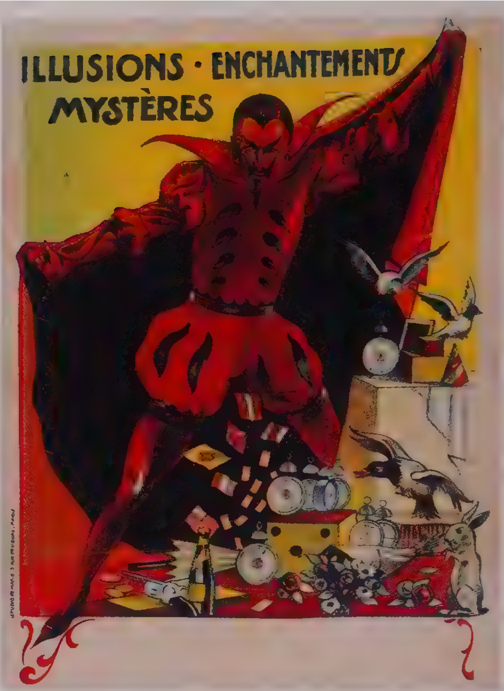

BLACKSTONE
THE WORLD'S
MASTER MAGICIAN

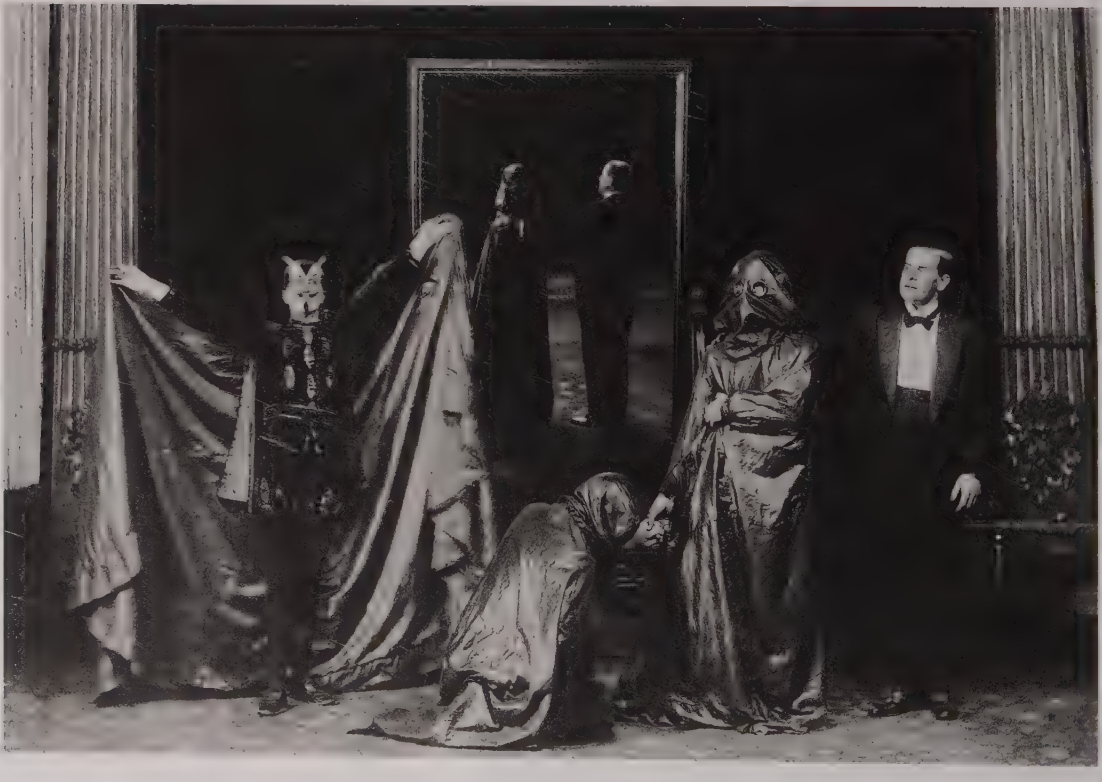

THURSTON
THE GREAT
MAGICIAN
THE WONDER SHOW OF
THE UNIVERSE
THE OTIS LITHOGRAPH CO

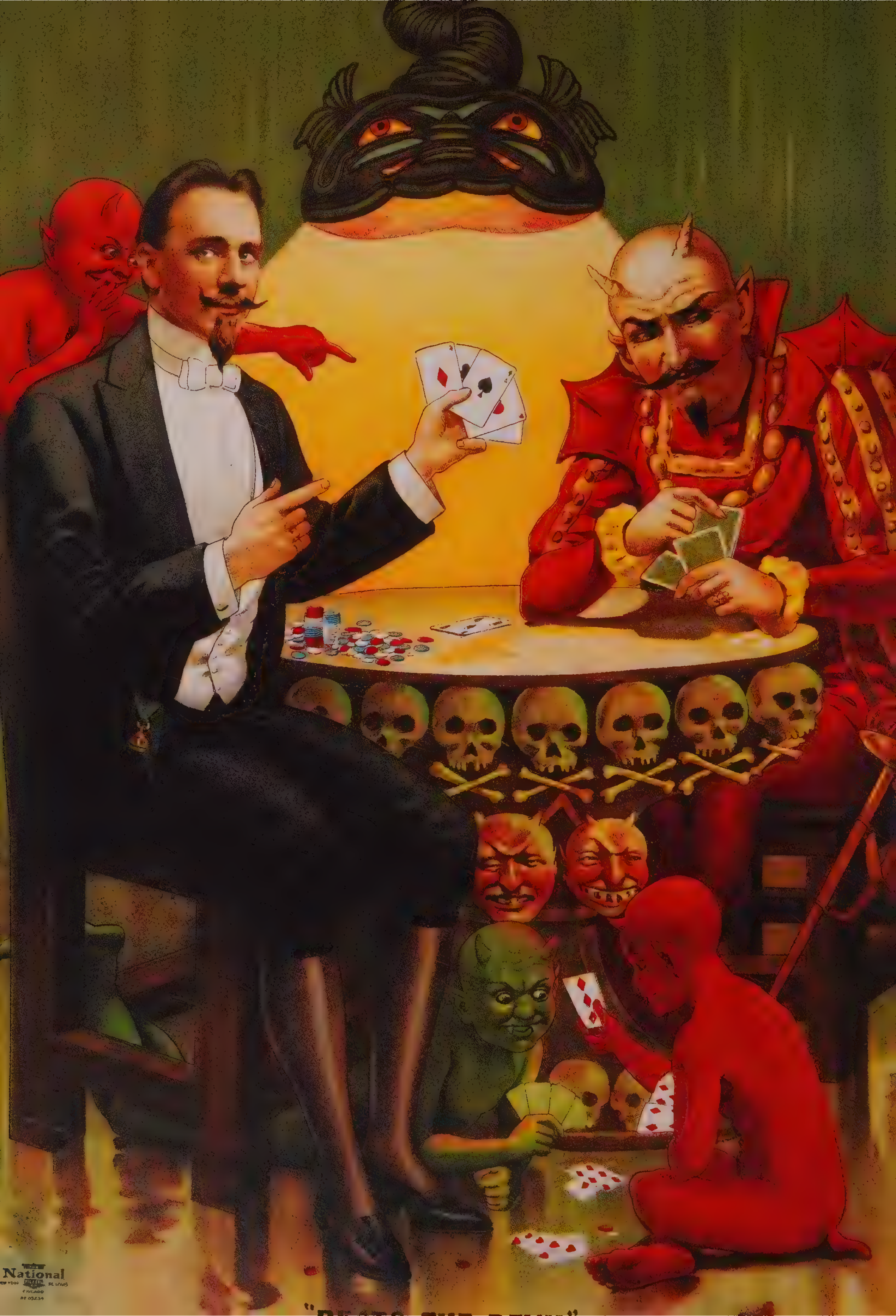
OPPOSITE: **ca. 1890** The innovative Belgian magician Servais Le Roy started his career in England by making himself up as Satan, and billing his act as "The Devil in Evening Clothes." The act perfectly complemented Le Roy's impish sense of humor. The idea of the Devil stepping onto a modern music-hall stage offered an appealing image for his audiences.

RIGHT: **ca. 1920** This stock poster—printed with an indistinct image so that it could be used by any magician—included the popular image of Mephistopheles, the Devil. An association with these dark forces made any show more serious and interesting; even the Devil seems incongruous next to the trappings of magic tricks such as birds, alarm clocks, and flowers.

BELOW: **1911** David Devant's astonishing illusion Hypotyposis seemed to materialize strange images of the past, present, and future within a large cheval mirror. Devant used the image of the Devil to represent a doomed future. At the finale of the effect, Devant disappeared from the stage and materialized in the glass. In this photo, the magician stands at the far right.







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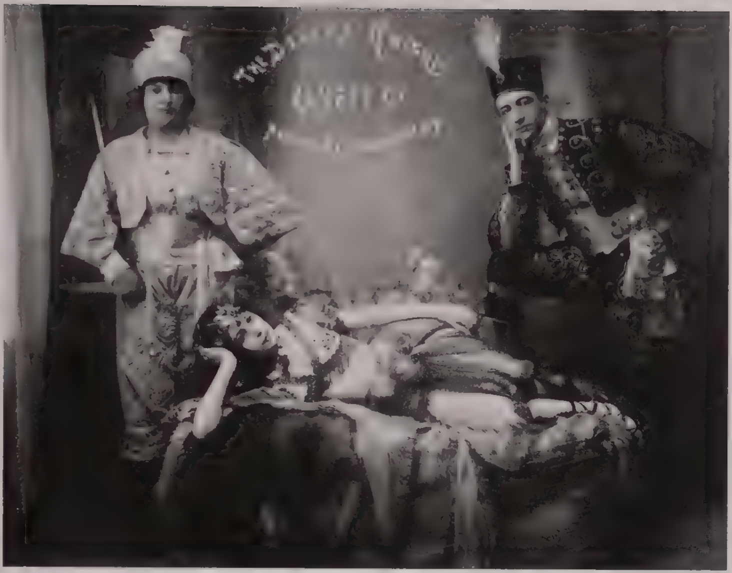
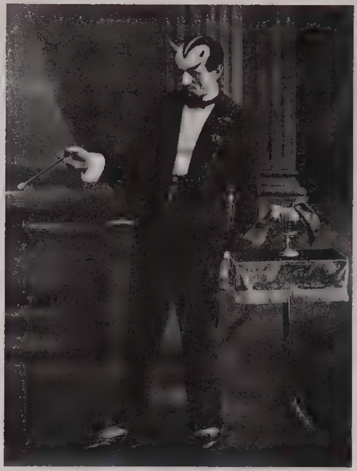
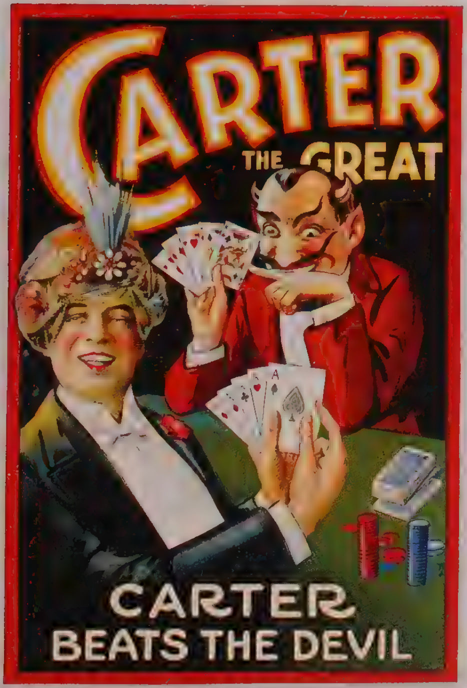


LEFT AND BELOW: **ca. 1912 and ca. 1920** The Alyetts were Parisian illusionists who brought their elaborate illusion act to European amusement parks. Their billing, "The Devil's Knights," cleverly implies their status in the world of demons. Josetti, below, was a German magician named J. Wessel who went one step further, donning a skullcap and horns to portray the Devil as a conjurer.

OPPOSITE: **ca. 1915** This stock poster consists of an image created for Fredrik the Great (Alexander Fredrik), an American magician who produced an elaborate show in 1912. "Nobody beats the Devil" was a popular catchphrase at the time, but the magician's poster visualized doing just that. Fredrik enjoys a grim game of cards, as his opponent looks stunned.



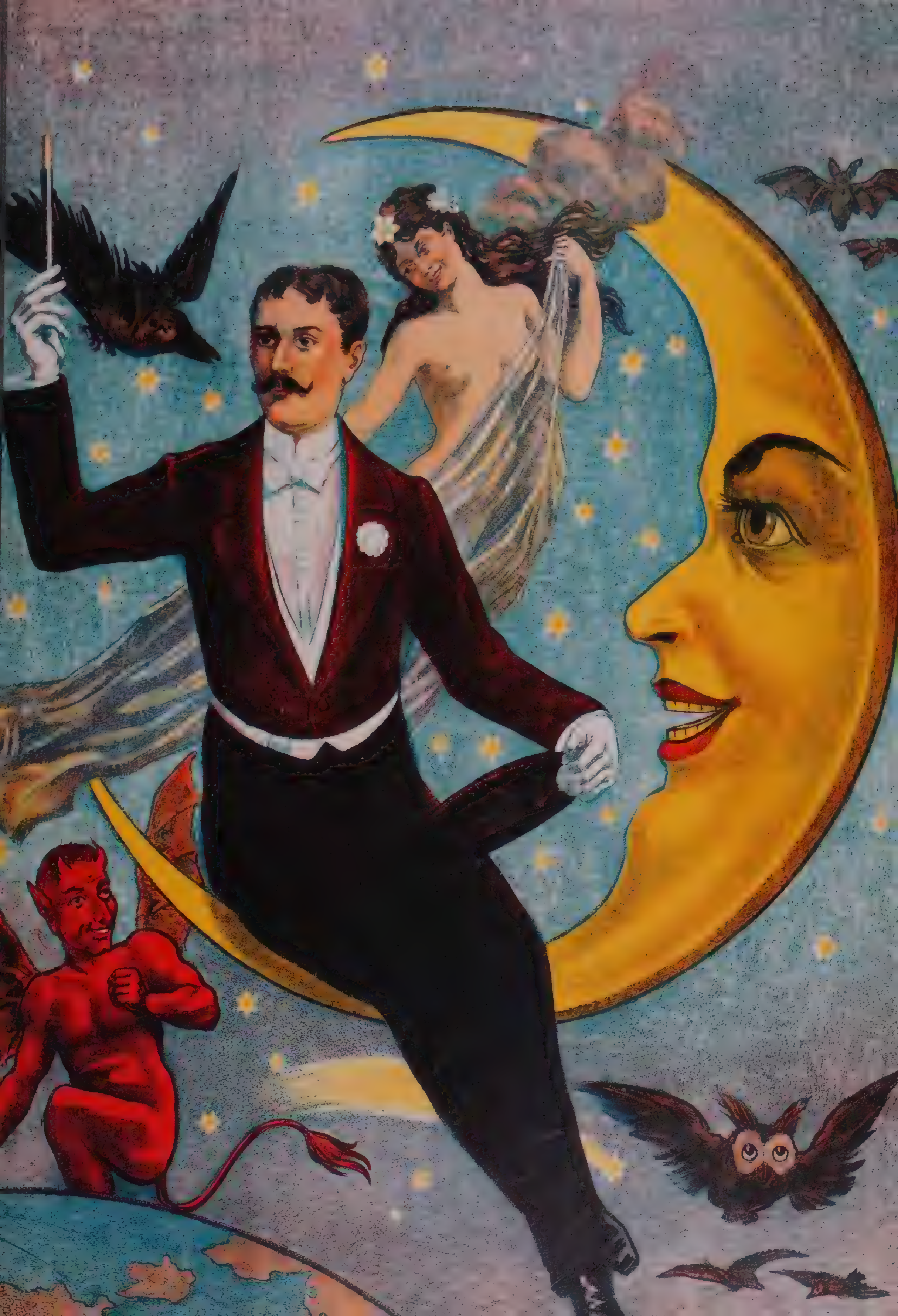


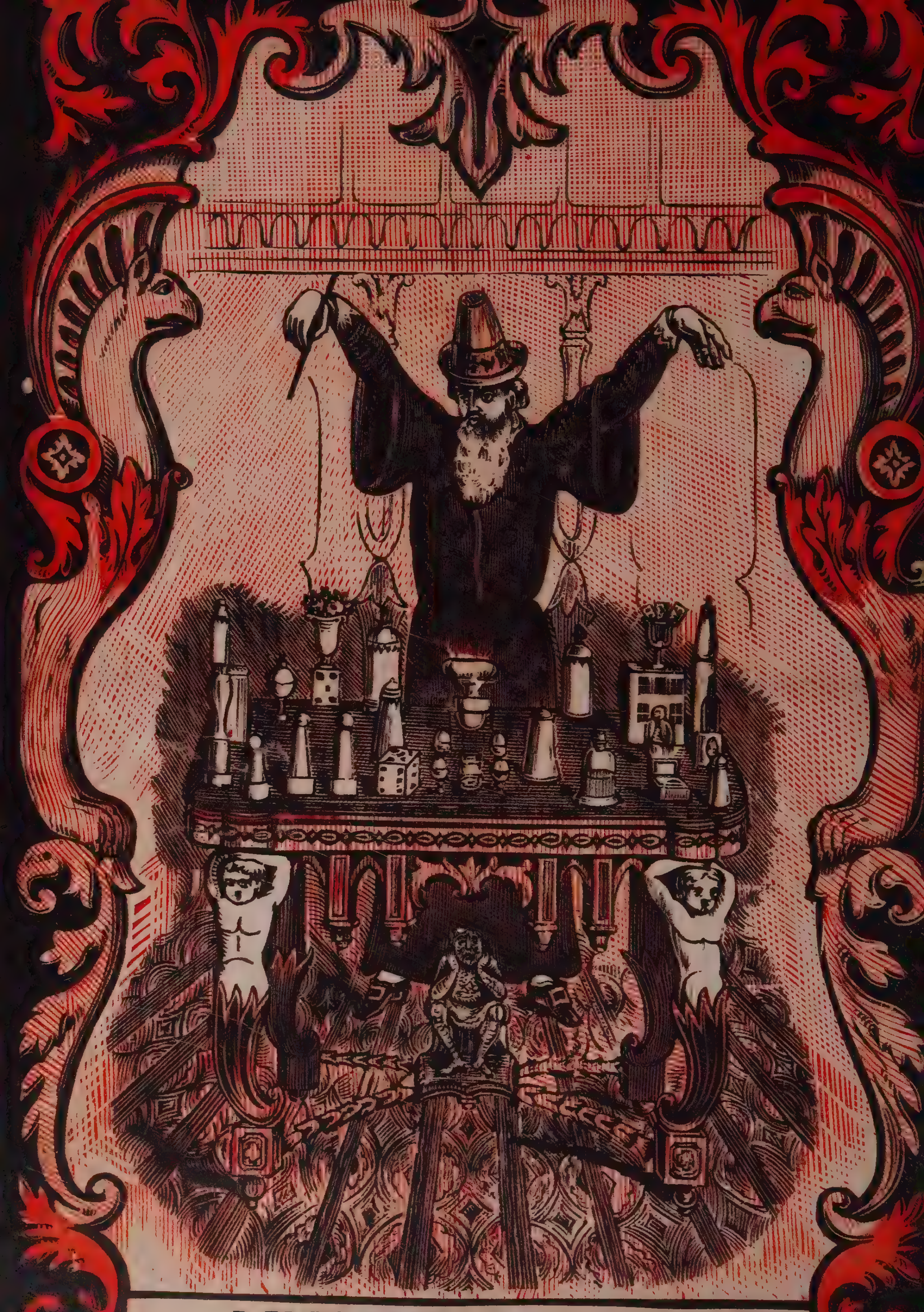
LEFT: **1936** Charles Carter, who toured around the world as Carter the Great, copied the "Beats the Devil" image for this comic and memorable window card. The Devil may think he's cheating by holding four kings. But Carter is even more deceptive, and holds four aces.

PAGES 126–127: **ca. 1925** William Nicol, known as the Great Nicola, toured the world with a modern illusion show and many sophisticated deceptions, but the ghastly image on this poster gave no hint of his accomplishments. The magician appealed to his 20th-century audience by recalling the ancient, infamous connections between magic and evil spirits.

FROM BLACK MAGIC TO MODERN MAGIC

Mike Caveney





ANCIENT CONJURING

3

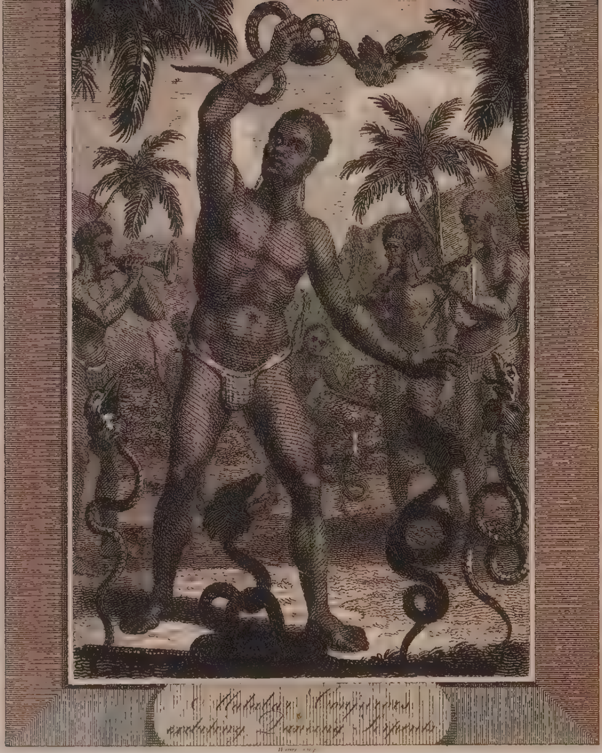
Mike Caveney

FROM BLACK MAGIC TO MODERN MAGIC

Of all the wonders in the magician's proverbial bag of tricks, it is how these conjurers transformed ancient sorcery into modern magic that is perhaps their greatest feat. For thousands of years, sorcerers and shamans claimed to possess supernatural powers that they used to create their magic. The purpose of these imposing demonstrations was to instill fear or gain power over the masses. This fear of what one doesn't understand is a universal human trait, and it was used with great success to manipulate people. Ironically, the very thing that proved to be the undoing of sorcery or black magic was the same thing that helped usher in the new modern magic: science.

PAGE 129: **late 19th century** Elements of black magic and modern magic are clearly evident in this intriguing stock poster. Though dressed in modern clothes, this magician clings to the concept of possessing godlike powers bestowed on him by the celestial beings that swarm around him.

OPPOSITE: **ca. 1880s** This image depicts another melding of ancient and modern magic. As suggested by the text "Ancient Conjuring," this performer retains the look and costume of an early wizard. His table, however, is set with an array of thoroughly modern Victorian-era magical apparatus.



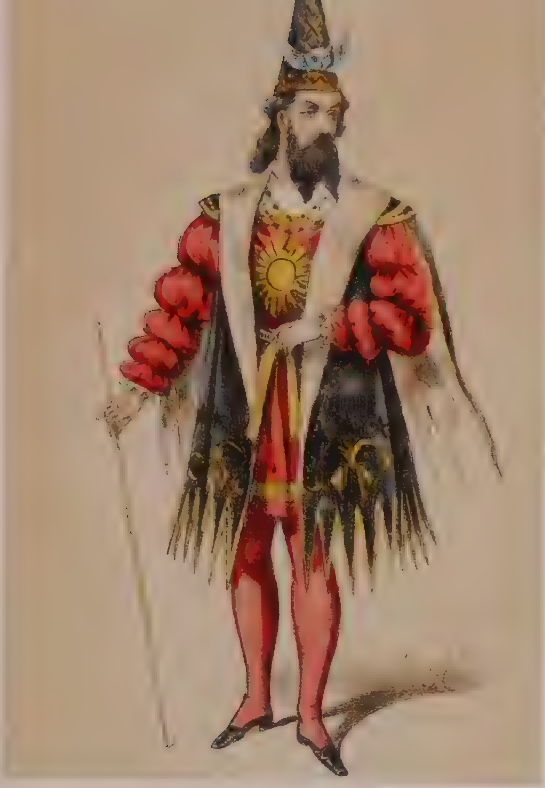
witnessed this scene of a Malabar priest, left, demonstrating his mastery over "dancing serpents."

So long as the masses were unaware that simple scientific principles were responsible for the clouds of smoke that suddenly issued forth from an altar fire, or how ghostly images appeared to dance in that smoke, the lofty positions held by the priests were secure. The shift began with the invention of movable type and the proliferation of affordable printed books. With more and more people learning to read, basic education and the principles of science came within the grasp of the general public, allowing them to peek behind the curtain and see exactly what the wizards were up to. Of this time period, the German philosopher Paul Carus wrote, in his introduction to Henry Ridgely Evans's *The Old and the New Magic* (1909), "Science has been pressed into the service of magic by ancient pagan priests, who utilized mechanical contrivances in their temples to impress the credulous with the supernatural power of their gods. When magic becomes discredited by science, religion is purified." Carus goes on to say, "The time has come for us to put away childish things and to relinquish the beliefs and practices of the medicine-man." Ever so slowly, science chipped away at the superstitions that shaped religion and occultism; stripped of these spectacular demonstrations of physical "proof," religious followers were left to believe simply on faith.

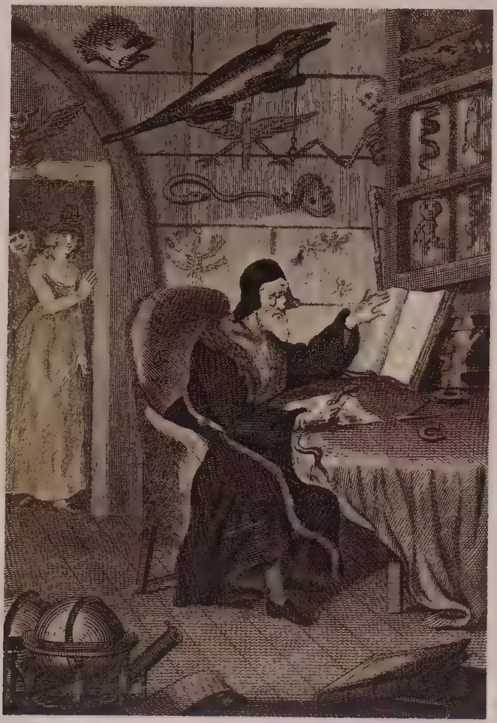
From Shaman's Tool to Showman's Art

As fear and superstition became less and less associated with wonder-workers, the craft of magic found itself slowly transformed from a tool into an art. Magicians found that they still had one important element to offer the world: the sense of wonder. But magic simply for the sake of wonder could not be presented as it had been for centuries. Medicine men of the past could cue the spirits, step back, and let them dance before the terrified believers. Modern magic would require a bit more finesse, a bit more showmanship. Presenters of miracles would no longer be feared for their power but rather admired for their unique abilities.

During the late 18th and early 19th centuries, having shaken off that unpleasant label of "witch" and moved their performances from fairgrounds to the comparative luxury of indoor spaces, magicians began to present their shows in a manner more suited to the sophisticated clientele whom they hoped to attract. Their equipment was no longer made from hammered tin but rather beveled glass and plated metal. Stage costumes were tailored from the smartest materials in the latest styles. Performers were witty, clever, refined, and topical. Magic had become respectable.

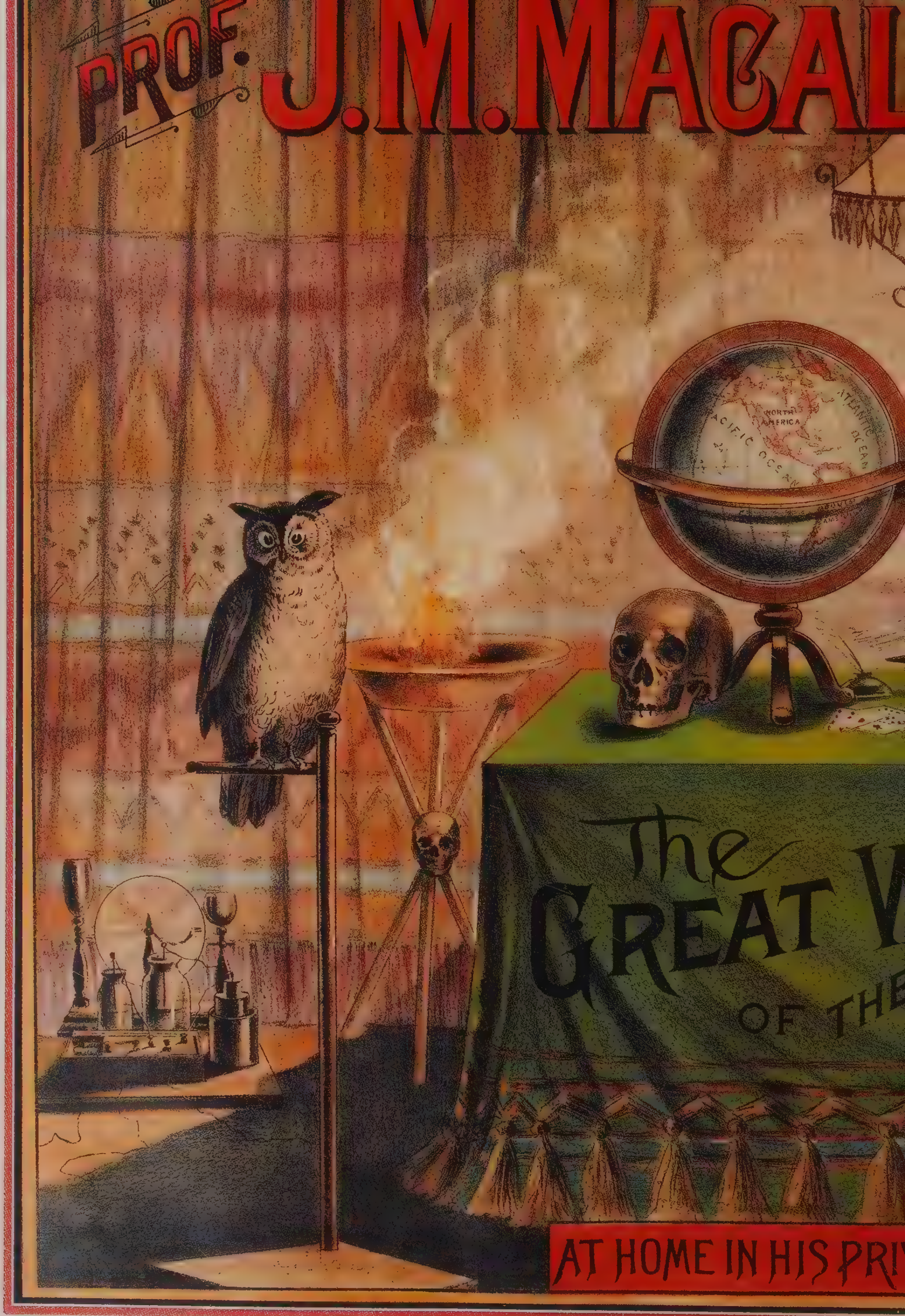


an exotic costume. As fear and superstition became less and less associated with wonder-workers, the craft of magic found itself transformed from a religious tool into an art. Magicians were now content to offer the world a sense of wonder.



RIGHT: **1791** From London came *The Conjurors' Magazine*, the first English-language periodical for magicians. This frontispiece from the first issue depicts an alchemist in his laboratory, but the tricks described therein were simple effects that could be performed by anyone.

PAGES 134–135: **ca. 1870** John Mawhr Macallister came to America from Scotland, and this rare poster suggests that his magical power stemmed from his intellectual affiliation with alchemy, astrology, and the occult. Nothing could be further from the truth, so it is ironic that he ended his life as a pauper and donated his body to science.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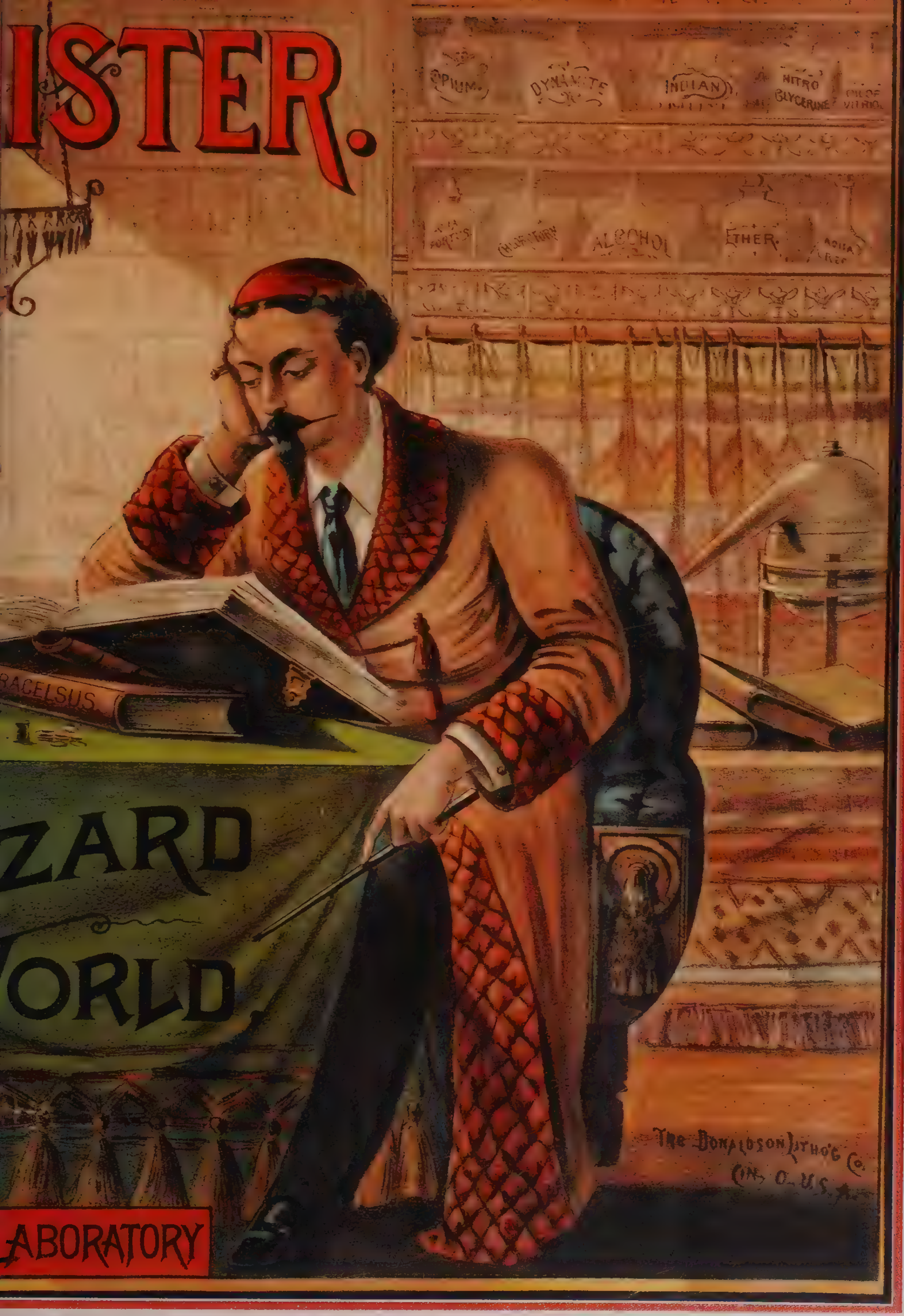
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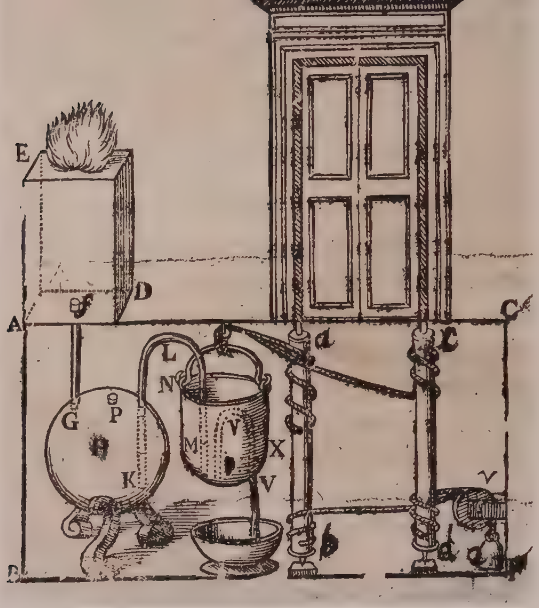
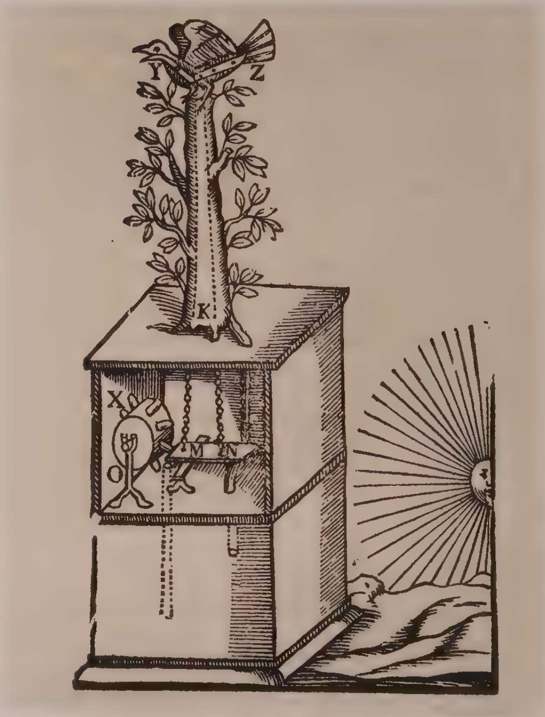


LEFT: 1680 The proliferation of affordable printed books allowed more people to study the principles of science. *Physiologia Kircheriana experimentalis* by German Jesuit scholar Athanasius Kircher provides an explanation for how the doors to a temple were made to open by lighting an altar fire.

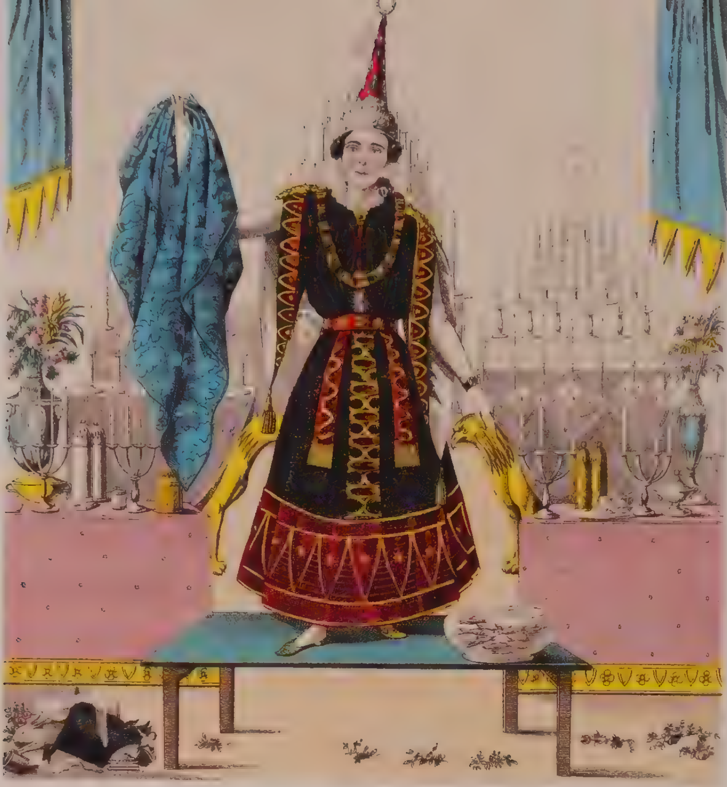
BELOW: 1680 In his book *Physiologia Kircheriana experimentalis*, Athanasius Kircher also explained some amusements of a more playful nature. Here an automaton bird is made to flap his wings by mechanical means. Thus the mystery of life is presented strictly as entertainment.

While science led to the downfall of black magic, modern magicians embraced it, knowing that scientific principles could be artfully disguised and presented as magical effects. Some men of science actually stepped out of their laboratories and onto the stage, choosing the life of a magician over that of a scientist. Joseph Vanek, born in Budapest in 1818, was a professor of physics before becoming Hungary's greatest magician. His demonstrations of magnetism and electricity raised eyebrows throughout Europe and the Far East, and those raised eyebrows turned to shrieks of horror when, during each performance, he "decapitated" his son and carried the bloody head into the audience for a cursory inspection (p. 147).

From Scotland came the globe-trotting John Henry Anderson, who claimed to carry seven tons of equipment that he described as being the "most gorgeous and costly apparatus of solid silver ... hitherto unknown in Europe." A newspaper review of an 1846 engagement in England reveals a few of the principles employed in Anderson's magic: "A more scientific entertainment we never witnessed than the feats of the Wizard, where we find experiments accomplished by chemistry, mechanism, electricity, hydraulics—which baffle even professors." At least part of Anderson's success must be attributed



retain the wizard's traditional dress. The sudden appearance of the bowl of fish at his feet was facilitated by his full-length robe. When magicians started dressing in formal clothes, new methods had to be created for certain classic effects.



to his lavish, multicolored playbills, printed with ornate illustrations and in such quantities that cities were awash in paper announcing the imminent arrival of "The Wizard of the North." (p. 161).

The polar opposite of Anderson was Wiljalba Frikell, born in Finland in 1818. In his book *Lessons in Magic* (1857), Frikell writes, "The use of complicated and cumbersome apparatus, to which modern conjurers have become addicted ... greatly diminishes the amount of astonishment they are enabled to produce—a defect which is not compensated by the external splendor and imposing effect of such paraphernalia." To prove his point, Frikell relied solely on his quick wit, pleasing personality, and considerable sleight-of-hand skills to entertain his audiences. Such performers who eschewed large quantities of apparatus were said to be "carpetbag" showmen, a term based on the fact that everything needed for an evening's performance could be transported in a single valise.

The Viennese magician Ludwig Döbler could never be accused of being a carpetbag showman. During the 1840s, Döbler would stroll onto the stage and fire his pistol, and 200 candles would instantly ignite. The elaborate secret to this spectacular effect involved a tiny hydrogen jet positioned below each candlewick, near the ends of two copper wires. An electrical charge was sent through the wires, producing a spark that ignited the gas, which in turn lit the candles. With Thomas Edison's electric light bulb still decades away, this clever use of electricity was a fine example of hiding a scientific principle behind a cloak of mystery.

Also in Vienna, in 1855, a sleight-of-hand master named Johann Nepomuk Hofzinser converted a spacious apartment into an elegant private salon. Three evenings per week, Dr. Hofzinser, as he was known, presented *Moments of Deception* to a tiny audience of perhaps 20 people who paid the extravagant amount of one golden ducat to gain admission. It was an ordinary pack of cards that stirred Hofzinser's passion to the point that he referred to conjuring with cards as "the poetry of magic." Throughout his life he created an impressive array of elegant routines. After witnessing one of Hofzinser's performances, the wife of the great Continental conjurer Carl Herrmann declared, "In the drawing room he is a god!"

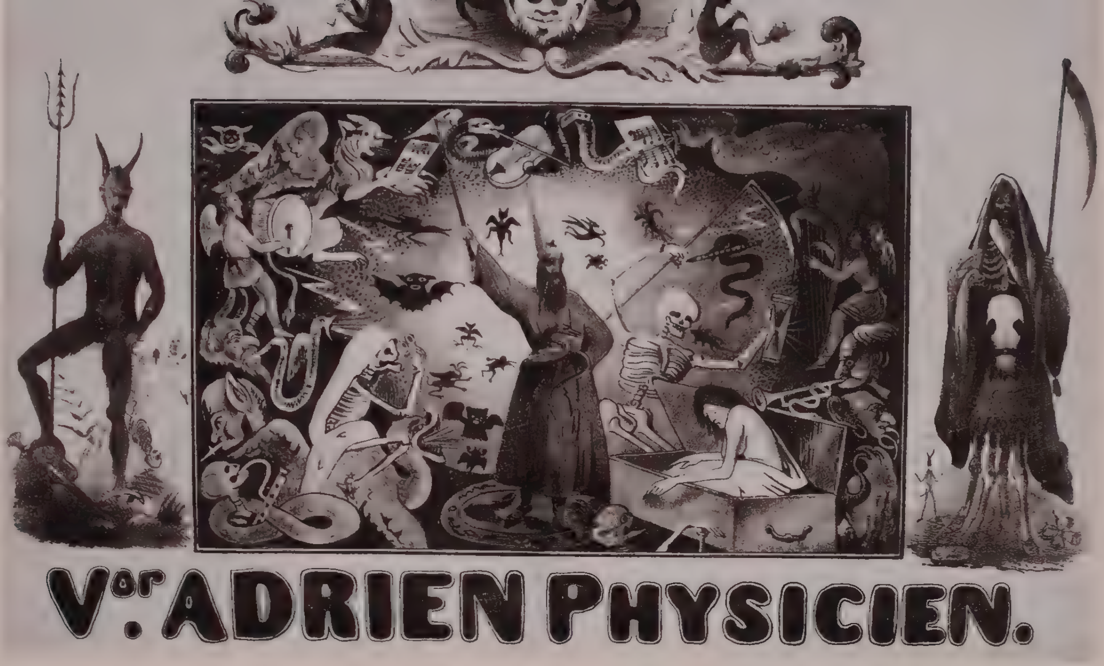
Robert-Houdin: The Father of Modern Magic

During the mid-19th century, there was no magician more influential than a Frenchman named Jean Eugène Robert-Houdin. Having already enjoyed a successful

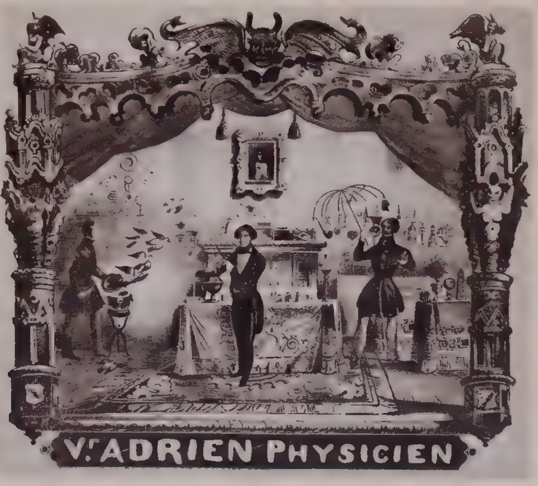
To a well-heeled Victorian-era audience, this wizard character, dressed in a conical hat and flowing robe, would have appeared old-fashioned.

career as a clockmaker and magician, just a few months before his 40th birthday Robert-Houdin opened his own tiny magic theater at the Palais-Royal, in the center of Paris. Each evening he presented *Soirées Fantastiques*, a show composed of his own original creations, including a number of clockwork, robot-like mechanisms called automata. These astonishing figures represented the epitome of human ingenuity in magic. Robert-Houdin's masterpiece was Antonio Diavolo, a petite acrobat—less than 3 feet tall—forged from carved wood, papier-mâché, brass tubing, steel levers, pistons, springs, and fabric (pp. 48 and 156). While swinging on a trapeze bar, the fearless Antonio dazzled onlookers by performing handstands, flipping head over heels, hanging by his knees, and finally releasing his grip on the trapeze and flying through the air into the hands of his master. If Antonio's daring routine appeared too amazing to be true, it was. He was what is known as a false automaton. Besides the intricate clockwork mechanism, which was readily apparent, Robert-Houdin incorporated certain magic principles into his costar to facilitate the illusion. After magicians around the world began copying certain effects created by Robert-Houdin, he came to be known as the Father of Modern Magic.

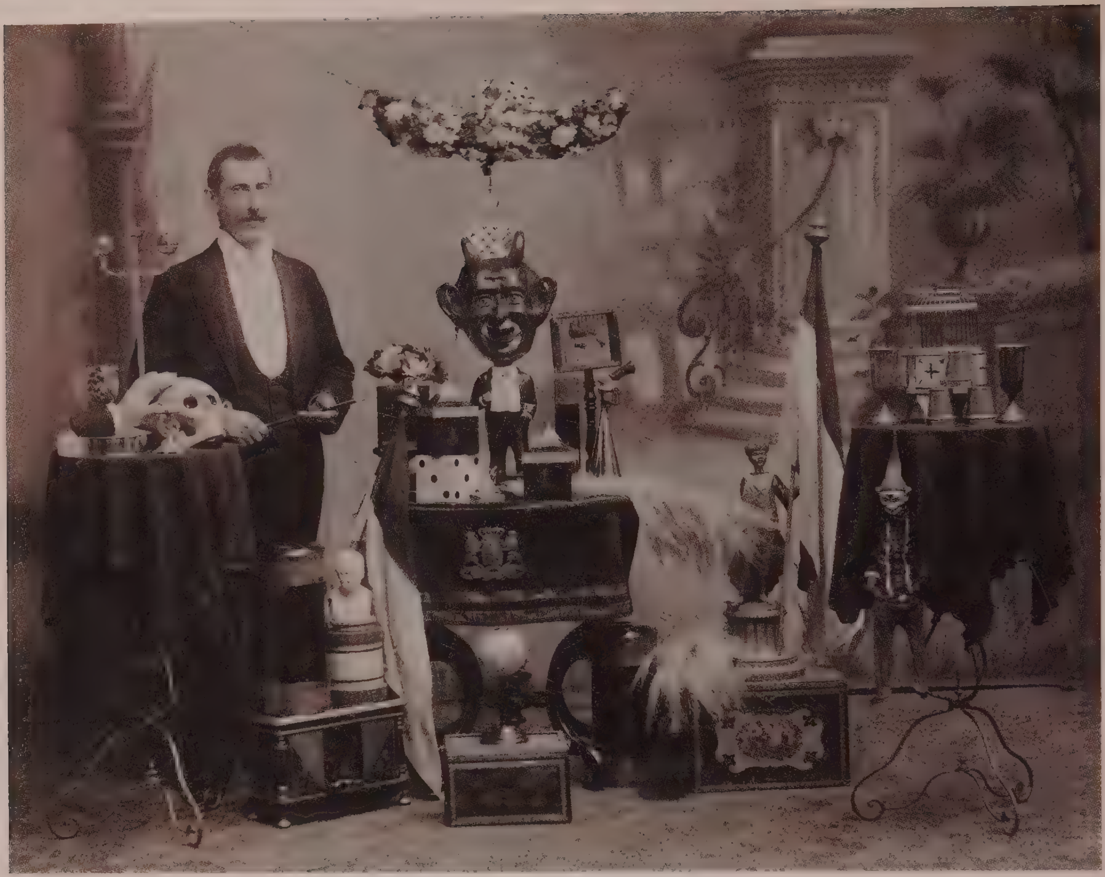
Perhaps the most vivid example of the confluence of old magic and new science occurred in Algiers in 1856. Robert-Houdin was coaxed out of retirement by the French government to quell a potential rebellion by a group of devout Muslims called Marabouts. The French authorities surmised that if Robert-Houdin could prove that his magic was more powerful than the supposed supernatural powers of the Marabout chieftains, the threat would pass. For what might have been the most important performance of his illustrious career, Robert-Houdin chose to dress one of his old tricks in a brand-new presentation. The Light and Heavy Chest was a small wooden box that had a hidden steel plate in its bottom. Any small child could lift the box, but when it was positioned directly over an electromagnet concealed beneath the stage, it was immovable by even the strongest man. When presenting this trick at his theater in Paris, Robert-Houdin would claim that a wave of his hand would increase the weight of the box; for the special performance in Algiers, the psychology was reversed. A brawny Marabout was asked to lift the box, which he did effortlessly. Robert-Houdin then made a dramatic gesture toward the man and claimed to have sapped his strength. The man grabbed onto the brass handle of the box and


Vor. ADRIEN PHYSICIEN.

strained with all his might to lift it. The chest didn't budge. Refusing to admit defeat, the man planted his feet and pulled again. At this point the electrical current was redirected into the brass handle, inflicting a painful shock on the unfortunate subject. Prying his hands loose from the handle, the man ran screaming from the stage. For one day, Robert Houdin had used magic as the ancient priests had done for centuries -to instill fear in the masses. By disguising a scientific principle as a magic trick, he created the illusion in the mind of the beholders that he possessed magical powers. No further problems were reported from Algeria.



ABOVE AND RIGHT: 1830 and 1844
During his career, Frenchman Victor Adrien bridged the eras of the old and new magic. While performing in Europe, he assumed the character of a traditional wizard, and his advertising contained devils, demons, and skeletons. Later on, after coming to America, he determined that presenting himself as a distinguished gentleman with an elegant stage setting was far more acceptable (and profitable).



Although more and more books on magic were published during the early 19th century, most of the tricks explained within were simply plagiarized from previous books published as far back as the 16th century. By the 1840s, established conjuring businesses were beginning to appear. In 1843, the W. H. M. Crambrook Company of London published the first magic catalog in the English language; additional magic shops soon followed, and there came a demand for mass-produced magical apparatus. Skilled craftsmen in England, France, Germany, and America started manufacturing a wide range of props made from wood and metal. The downside of this situation was that so many magicians were now performing the same tricks.

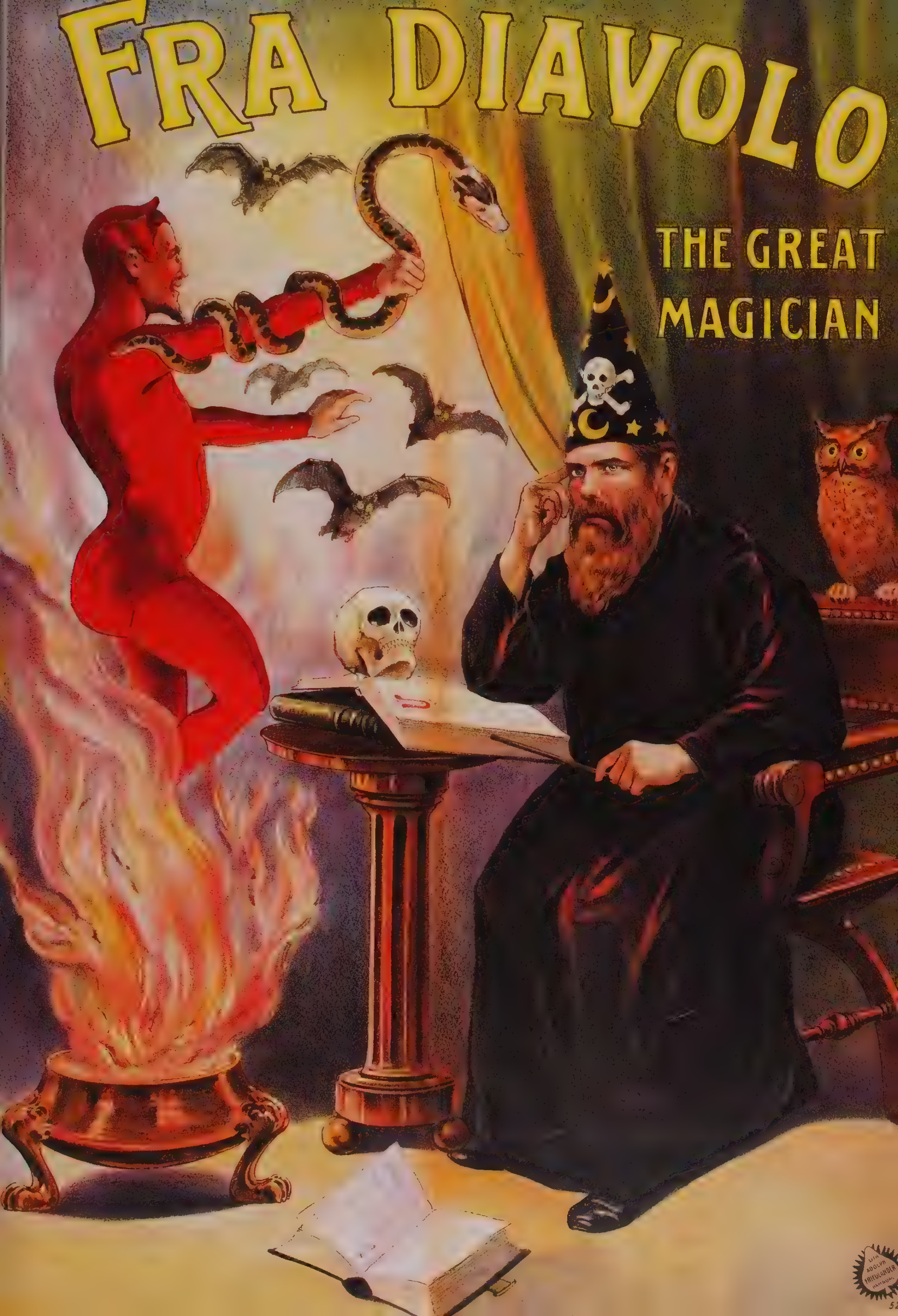
Book of Secrets Revitalizes the Art

In 1876, a British barrister and amateur magician named Angelo Lewis published a landmark book that stunned the magic world. Writing under the pseudonym Professor Hoffmann, *Modern Magic*—followed by *More Magic* (1890) and *Later Magic* (1904)—explained most of the tricks that were currently in use by magicians around the world (p. 159). With their precious secrets not only laid bare but available for a few shillings to any casual browser at the local bookstall, many magicians pointed to this betrayal as the day magic died. But Lewis viewed the situation quite differently. The tricks explained in his book, he proposed, had entertained audiences for

ABOVE: **ca. 1880** David Tobias Bamberg represents the fourth of six generations of Holland's legendary family of magicians. He was the father of Tobias "Theo" Bamberg (Okito) and grandfather of David Bamberg (Fu Manchu). He is shown here with an astonishing assortment of late 19th-century professionally made magic apparatus.

OPPOSITE: **1910** Magic didn't transform itself from ancient to modern overnight. It was a long, slow process that occurred at different times throughout the world. In 1910 Fra Diavolo ("Brother Devil," in Italian) was clinging to the trappings of the ancient wizards. He is shown here studying his book of spells and conjuring a devil and serpent from a burning cauldron, effects that certainly did not appear in his show.

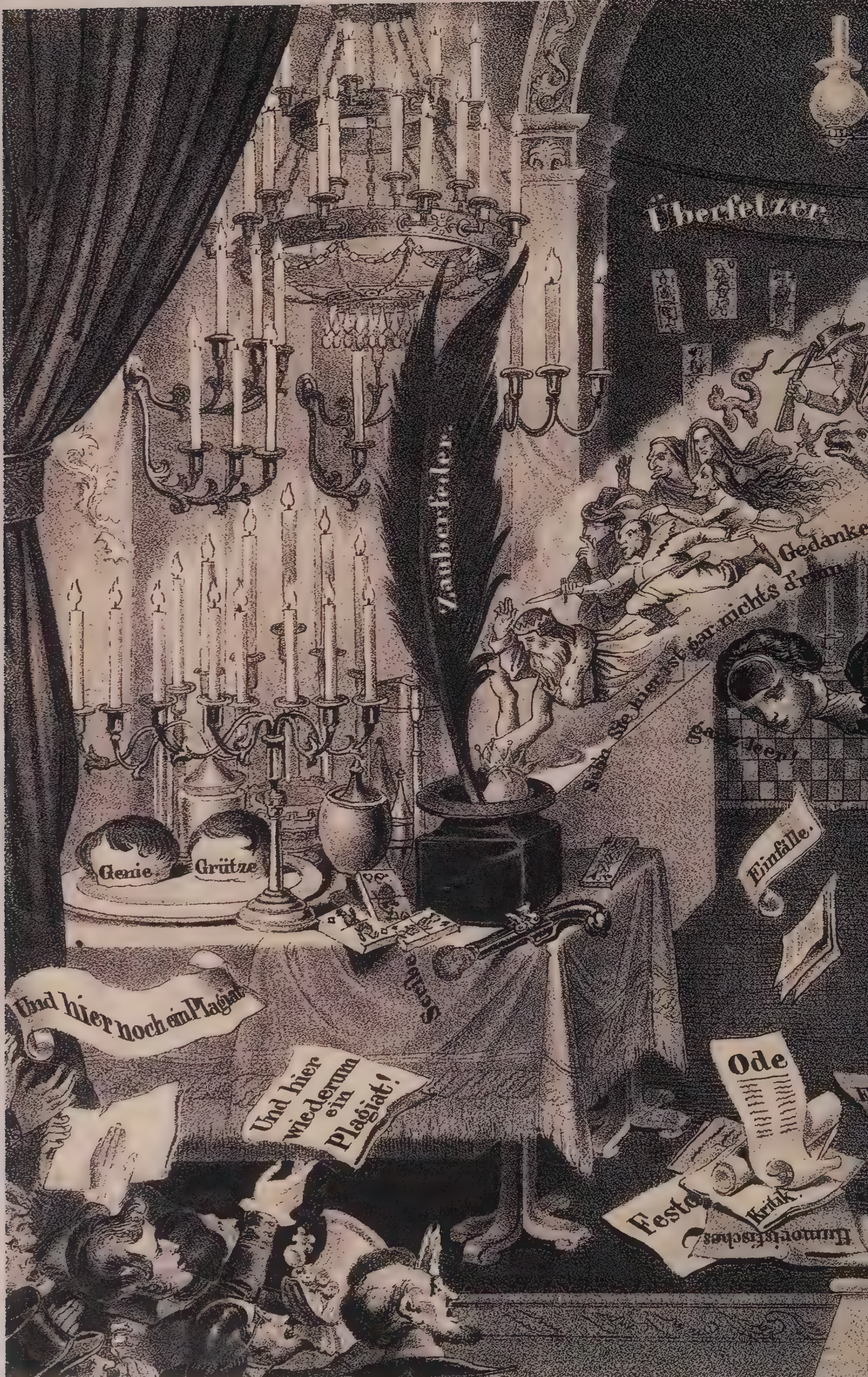
PAGES 142–143: **1840** This print from Germany uses the likeness of the famous stage magician Döbler to satirize the literary plagiarism that was prevalent at the time. The thoughts and ideas of Goethe, Shakespeare, and Schiller fly over the empty head of the magician–writer and into his inkwell-shaped top hat.

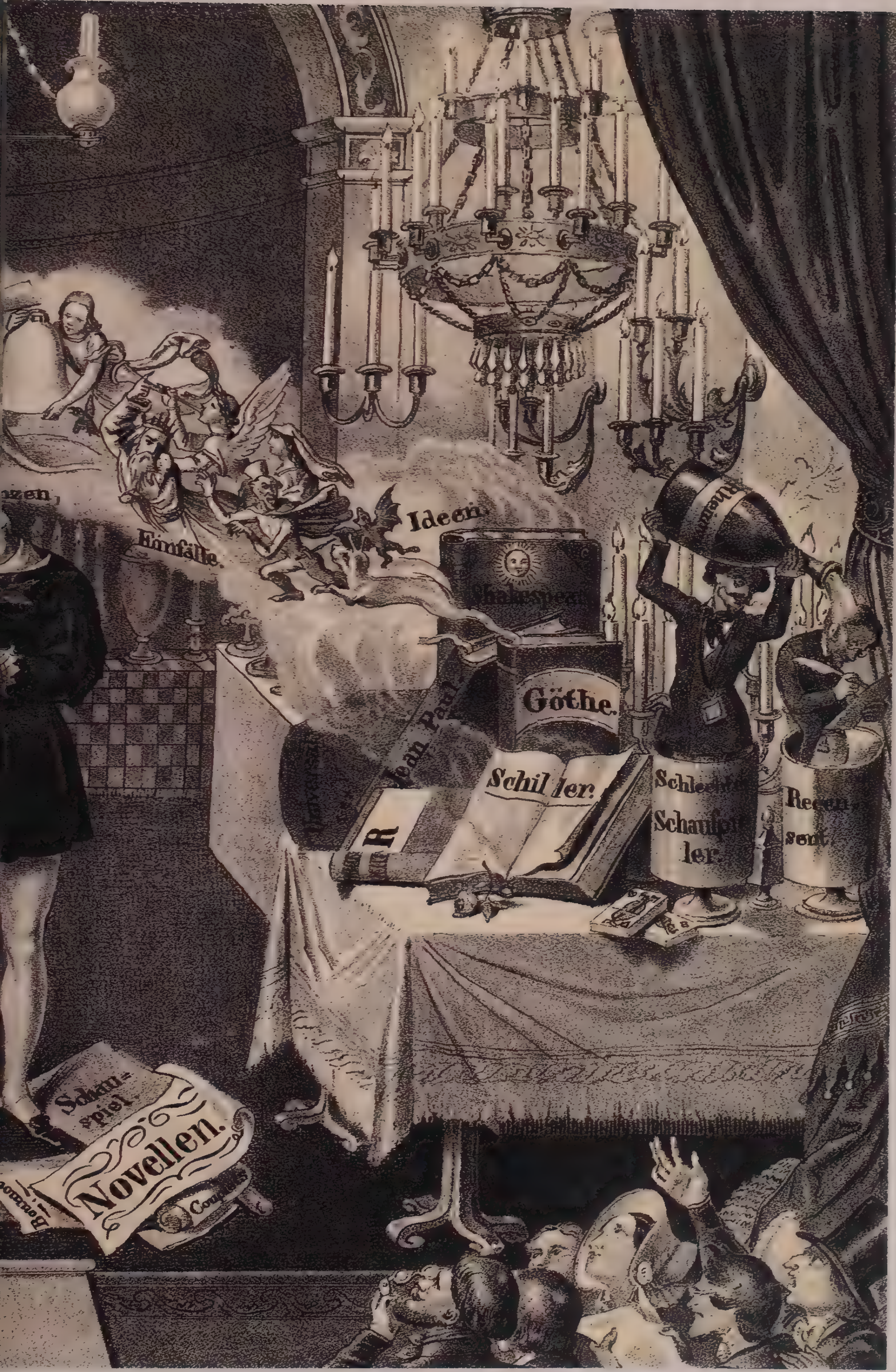


FRA DIAVOLO

THE GREAT MAGICIAN

LITH
ADOLPH
FRIEDLANDER
HAMBURG
52


Überſetzer.
Zauberfeder.
Gedanke
Sehn Sie hier ist gar nichts d'rinn
ganz leer!
Einfälle.
Genie
Grütze
Seele
Und hier noch ein Plagiat
Und hier wiederum ein Plagiat!
Ode
Fest
Kritik.
Humoriſtiſches


nzen,
Einfälle.
Ideen.
Shakespear
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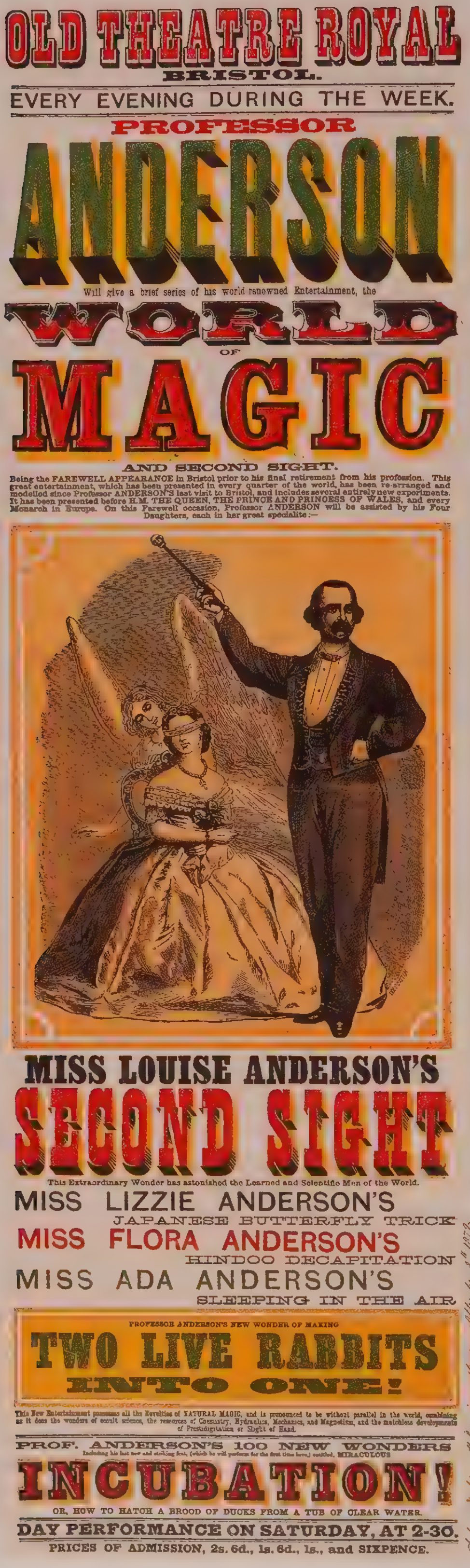

OLD THEATRE ROYAL
BRISTOL.
EVERY EVENING DURING THE WEEK.
PROFESSOR
ANDERSON
Will give a brief series of his world renowned Entertainment, the
WORLD
OF
MAGIC
AND SECOND SIGHT.

Being the FAREWELL APPEARANCE in Bristol prior to his final retirement from his profession. This great entertainment, which has been presented in every quarter of the world, has been re-arranged and modelled since Professor ANDERSON'S last visit to Bristol, and includes several entirely new experiments. It has been presented before H.M. THE QUEEN, THE PRINCE AND PRINCESS OF WALES, and every Monarch in Europe. On this Farewell occasion, Professor ANDERSON will be assisted by his Four Daughters, each in her great specialite:—

MISS LOUISE ANDERSON'S
SECOND SIGHT
This Extraordinary Wonder has astonished the Learned and Scientific Men of the World.
MISS LIZZIE ANDERSON'S
JAPANESE BUTTERFLY TRICK
MISS FLORA ANDERSON'S
HINDOO DECAPITATION
MISS ADA ANDERSON'S
SLEEPING IN THE AIR

PROFESSOR ANDERSON'S NEW WONDER OF MAKING
TWO LIVE RABBITS
INTO ONE!

This New Entertainment possesses all the Novelties of NATURAL MAGIC, and is pronounced to be without parallel in the world, combining as it does the wonders of occult science, the resources of Chemistry, Hydraulics, Mechanics, and Magnetism, and the matchless developments of Prestidigitation or Slight of Hand.

PROF. ANDERSON'S 100 NEW WONDERS
Including his last new and striking feat, (which he will perform for the first time here) entitled, MIRACULOUS
INCUBATION!
OR, HOW TO HATCH A BROOD OF DUCKS FROM A TUB OF CLEAR WATER.
DAY PERFORMANCE ON SATURDAY, AT 2-30.
PRICES OF ADMISSION, 2s. 6d., 1s. 6d., 1s., and SIXPENCE.

[illegible] September 5th 1873

LEFT: **ca. 1867** By this time in his long career the elder Anderson had suffered three theater fires and his great fortune had dwindled to the point of bankruptcy. This beautiful playbill is from a drastically scaled-down show that lacked his usual silver-plated apparatus and featured instead the talents of his four daughters, including Louise, who demonstrated second sight, the ability to see without the use of one's eyes.

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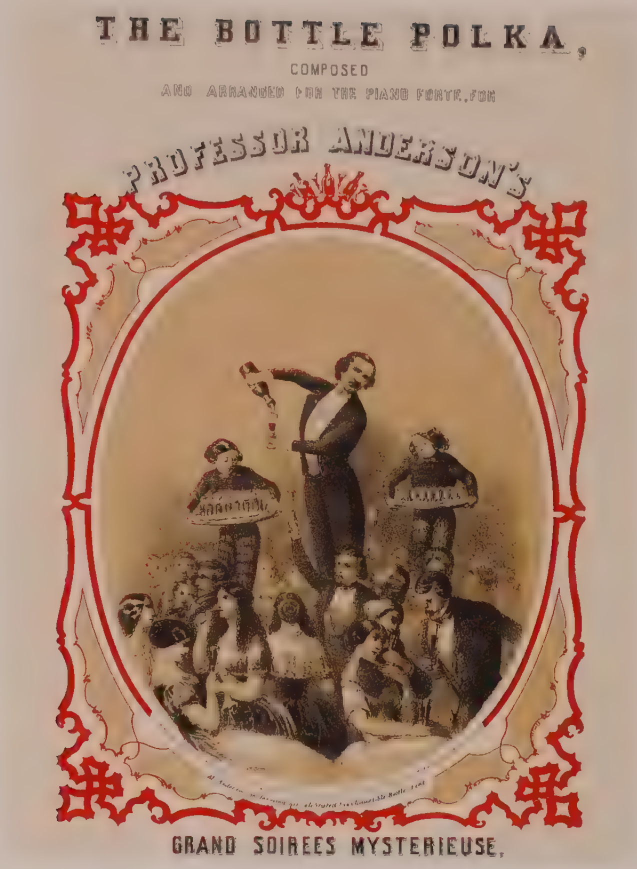
generations. By explaining them in a serious textbook, he hoped to first generate widespread interest in the art but also to encourage his contemporaries to update their ancient practice by developing modern effects and new methods. Professor Hoffmann's books, considered landmarks even today, succeeded in forcing magicians to brush the dust off of their art and embark on a new era of magic. The era that they were dragged into, kicking and screaming, is fondly regarded today as the golden age of magic.

In his second book, *More Magic*, Professor Hoffmann provided a detailed explanation of French magical genius Buatier de Kolta's Vanishing Lady, a trick that had stunned European audiences just four years earlier (pp. 158–159). De Kolta could not have been pleased that Professor Hoffmann exposed his astonishing trick's inner workings without authorization, but the publication did nothing to dampen de Kolta's creative juices. He went on to invent such lasting classics as the Multiplying Billiard Balls, Paper Flowers from a Cone, Vanishing Birdcage, and a fantastic illusion called the Expanding Die. In this last effect, de Kolta would enter the stage carrying a small leather satchel and announce, "My wife is inside this case." From within the case he would remove a die measuring about eight inches on a side, state, "My wife is inside this die," and set

RIGHT: **ca. 1850** John Henry Anderson, also sometimes called Professor Anderson, was a master of self-promotion, and his image appeared on no fewer than four different sheet-music covers. Here he performs his famous Inexhaustible Bottle trick for an audience of wealthy patrons on the cover of "The Bottle Polka."

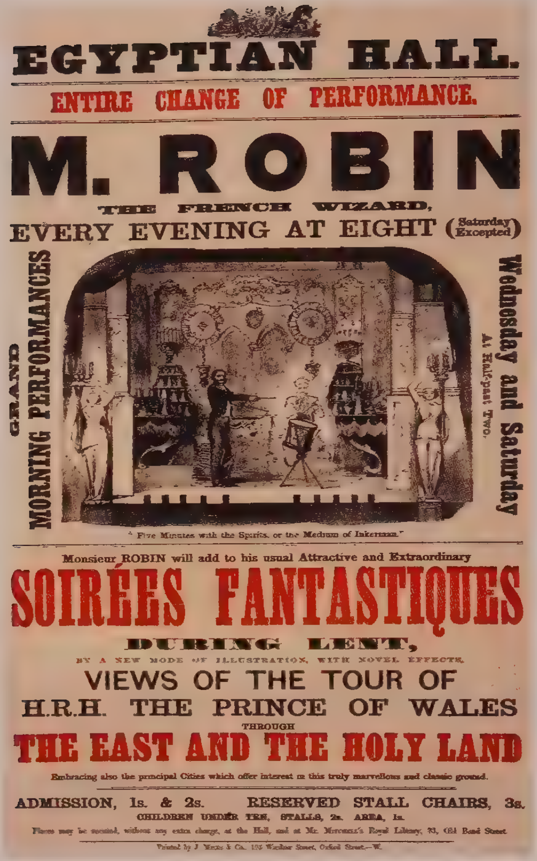

THE BOTTLE POLKA,
COMPOSED
AND ARRANGED FOR THE PIANO FORTE, FOR
PROFESSOR ANDERSON'S
GRAND SOIREES MYSTERIEUSE,

the die on a low table. Suddenly, the die would grow to approximately three feet square, and de Kolta would lift the now giant die to reveal that, indeed, his wife was sitting comfortably underneath. With a modus operandi that relied on such modern materials as telescoping brass tubing and hand-rolled spring steel, this diabolical effect could not have been created a generation earlier.

Arguably the greatest of all the magicians' laboratories was that of John Nevil Maskelyne and his longtime associate George Cooke. In 1873, Maskelyne leased an upstairs theater in a building called Egyptian Hall, located in Piccadilly, London (pp. 164–167). For more than 30 years, this inventive craftsman spent his days tinkering in an adjoining workshop, creating an incredible series of illusions that would grace the theater's stage. Maskelyne enjoyed building automata, such as a Hindu figure named Psycho who could play (and often win) a popular card game called whist (p. 51), and a pretty young artist figure named Zoe who could sketch recognizable celebrity portraits (p. 168). Like Robert-Houdin's work before him, Maskelyne's clockwork figures were also false automata, meaning that magic principles played an important role in their operation. In 1905, Maskelyne moved his operation to larger quarters in St. George's Hall on nearby Regent Street, and welcomed a dashing young illusionist named David Devant as his partner. With his living quarters located just above the theater and a workshop right on the premises, Maskelyne had created a perfect world for himself. On numerous occasions, Maskelyne & Devant employed magicians to take an act of their original illusions on the road, to the provincial music halls of Britain and even as far away as South Africa and Australia.

Among Film's Earliest Innovators

Magicians were constantly striving to stay one step ahead of the latest scientific inventions, and in 1896 that objective placed them nose to nose with a brand-new novelty called cinema. A Frenchman named Georges Méliès had spent time in London working in his father's shoe business. While his days were occupied with retail sales, his evenings were spent at Maskelyne's and Cooke's famous Egyptian Hall, watching performances by the world's greatest magicians. Returning to Paris, Méliès continued his magical education by taking lessons from Émile Voisin, a manufacturer and dealer in magical apparatus, and after his father turned the shoe business over to his three sons, in 1888, Méliès sold his share to his brothers and purchased the slightly rundown Theatre Robert-



EGYPTIAN HALL.

ENTIRE CHANGE OF PERFORMANCE.

M. ROBIN

THE FRENCH WIZARD,

EVERY EVENING AT EIGHT (Saturday Excepted)

GRAND MORNING PERFORMANCES

Wednesday and Saturday

At Half-past Two.

" Five Minutes with the Spirits, or the Medium of Inkerman."

Monsieur ROBIN will add to his usual Attractive and Extraordinary

SOIRÉES FANTASTIQUES

DURING LENT,

BY A NEW MODE OF ILLUSTRATION, WITH NOVEL EFFECTS,

VIEWS OF THE TOUR OF

H.R.H. THE PRINCE OF WALES

THROUGH

THE EAST AND THE HOLY LAND

Embracing also the principal Cities which offer interest in this truly marvellous and classic ground.

ADMISSION, 1s. & 2s. RESERVED STALL CHAIRS, 3s.

CHILDREN UNDER TEN, STALLS, 2s. AREA, 1s.

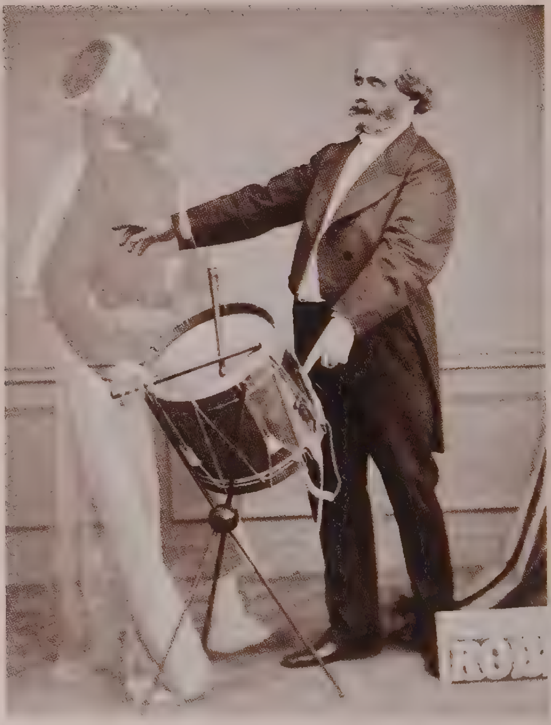
Places may be secured, without any extra charge, at the Hall, and at Mr. Mitchell's Royal Library, 33, Old Bond Street

Printed by J. [illegible] & Co. [illegible] Wardour Street, Oxford Street.—W.

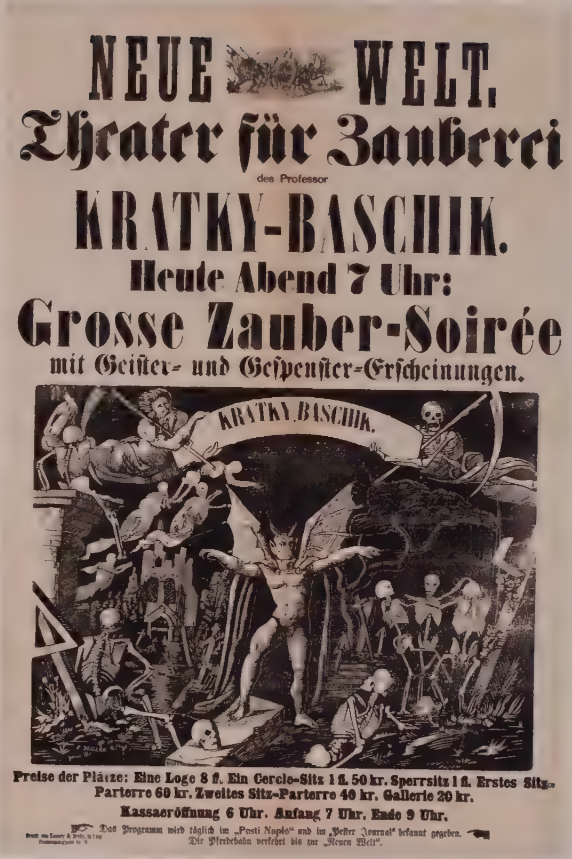
LEFT AND BELOW: 1852 In this rare photograph, below, evoking the Spirit Drum illusion, Dutch magician Henri Robin uses a double-exposed image to suggest that a ghost is in fact beating the drum. The actual secret onstage involved electricity, a new scientific principle that Robin frequently used even though scientists had only recently harnessed its power. The handbill from his London engagement at Egyptian Hall, left, shows the drum and its ghostly player.

Houdin (pp. 150–151). He was well aware that right upstairs Louis Lumière was experimenting with a machine that could project moving images. At the premiere of Lumière's Cinématographe, Méliès sat spellbound and immediately tried to purchase a projector for his own theater. Lumière refused, so Méliès turned to London, where Robert W. Paul had just started producing his own projector that he called the Theatrograph. Within months, Méliès was showing films to patrons of Theatre Robert-Houdin. After studying the projecting device, Méliès was able to design his own camera, and soon he was in the movie business. During his illustrious career, Méliès would produce an estimated 500 films.

The task of debuting Lumière's Cinématographe in London was turned over to the well-respected French magician and shadowgraphist Félicien Trewey (p. 174). The demonstration was hugely successful, and, within 10 days, the man who would become England's most famous magician, David Devant, had purchased a Theatrograph from Paul and was showing animated pictures—images presented in rapid sequence to create the illusion of fluid motion—at Egyptian Hall. Soon after, another projector was sold to American illusionist Carl Hertz, who made the showing of films an integral part of his performances around the world.



RIGHT: **ca. 1873** Kratky-Baschik determined that the confluence of culture and entertainment at Vienna's 1873 World's Fair provided the perfect environment for a magic theater. His custom-built venue offered Pepper's Ghost, an optical illusion that conjured up the devils and skeletons depicted on this playbill.



NEUE WELT.
Theater für Zauberei
des Professor
KRATKY-BASCHIK.
Heute Abend 7 Uhr:
Grosse Zauber-Soirée
mit Geiſter- und Geſpenſter-Erſcheinungen.

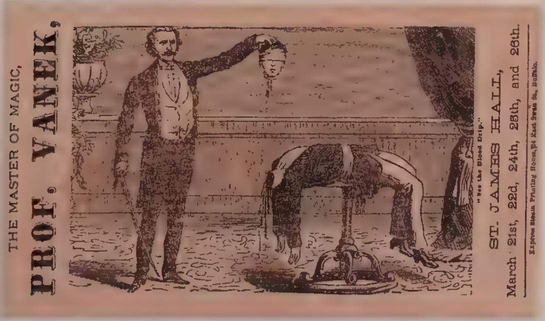
KRATKY BASCHIK.

Preise der Plätze: Eine Loge 8 fl. Ein Cercle-Sitz 1 fl. 50 kr. Sperrsitz 1 fl. Erstes Sitz-Parterre 60 kr. Zweites Sitz-Parterre 40 kr. Gallerie 20 kr.
Kassaeröffnung 6 Uhr. Anfang 7 Uhr. Ende 9 Uhr.
Das Programm wird täglich im „Pesti Napló“ und im „Peſter Journal“ bekannt gegeben.
Die Pferdebahn verkehrt bis zur „Neuen Welt“.

Early Film Creates Magic Onscreen

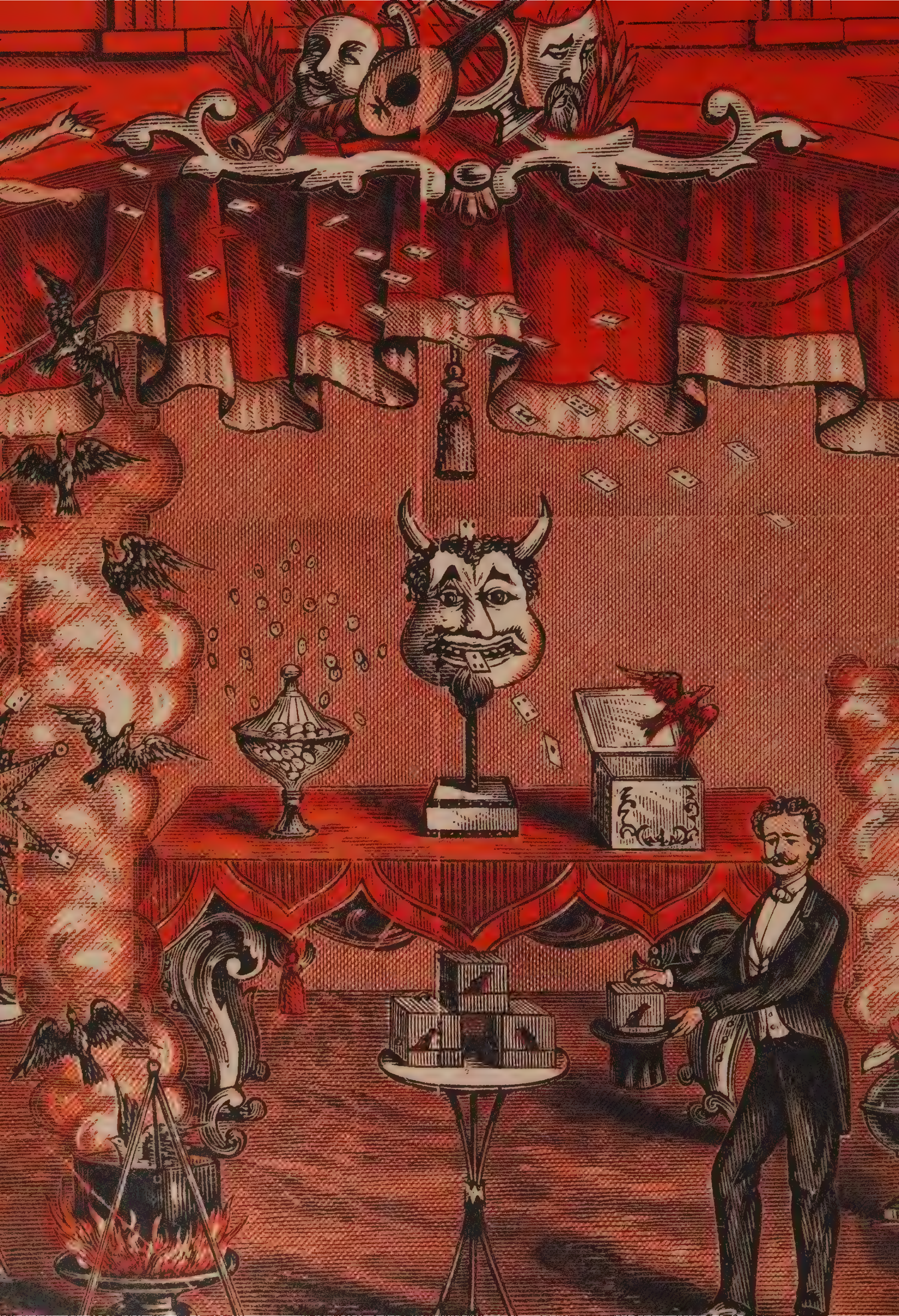
The attraction of the earliest films was the mere fact that the images were moving—a man and woman kissing, a train roaring down the track, a crowd of people leaving a building. When filmgoers were ready for a bit more substance, the perfect subject was that most visual art form, magic. By their very nature, early films were short visual scenarios that appealed strictly to the eye. This visual eye candy is exactly what magicians had been delivering to theaters for the past century. Devant, Maskelyne, and Trewey were the first magicians to step from the stage to the screen when they filmed routines from their professional repertoires, as early as 1896.

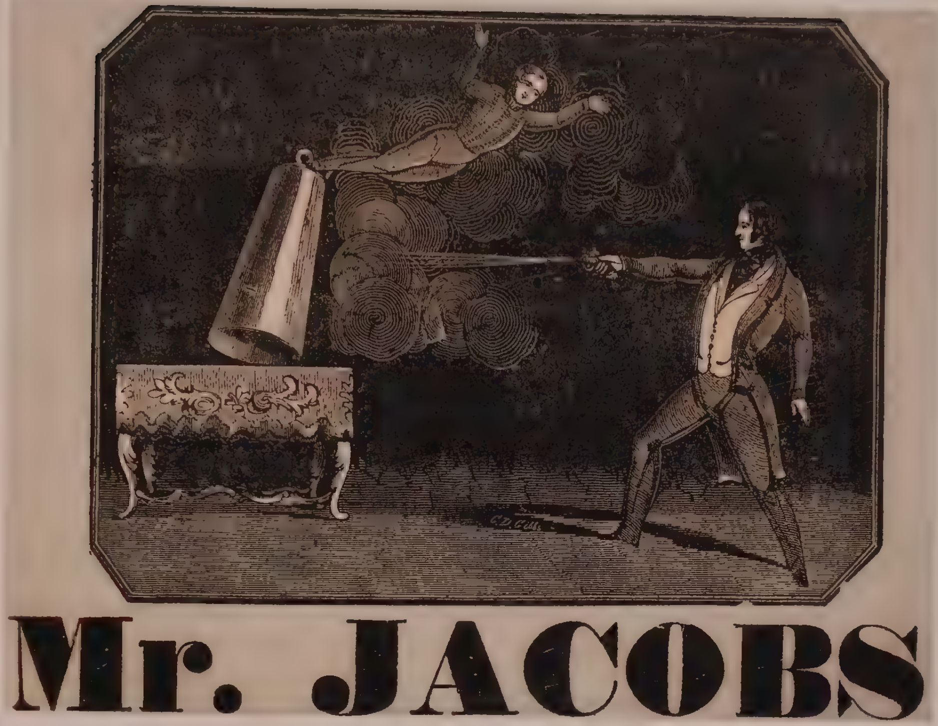
The public flocked to screenings of all moving pictures, and the demand for new films was enormous. Back in Paris, Méliès's magical background provided a wide array of premises for short films, and he constructed a movie studio, in 1897, that was exactly the same dimensions as Theatre Robert-Houdin. Objects large and small, including people, were made to vanish or appear simply by stopping and starting the camera. De Kolta's Vanishing Lady, the illusion that startled the world back in 1886, made a triumphant return in Méliès's 1896 film of the same name. This cinematic version featured the added surprise of the lady being transformed into a skeleton. Devant's Artist's Dream



THE MASTER OF MAGIC,
PROF. VANEK,
"See the Blood Drip."
ST. JAMES HALL,
March 21st, 22d, 24th, 25th, and 26th.

LEFT: **1873** Vanek's show was a strange combination of scientific demonstrations using magnetism and electricity, and the horrific feat of decapitating his son and carrying the bloody head into the audience for inspection.





illusion, where the painted portrait of a woman came to life, inspired Méliès to film *A Spiritualist Photographer* in 1903. Here, a woman standing in front of a canvas suddenly turns into a two-dimensional image, which Méliès proceeds to roll up. When the canvas is later unrolled, the effect is reversed, and the lady reappears alive and well.

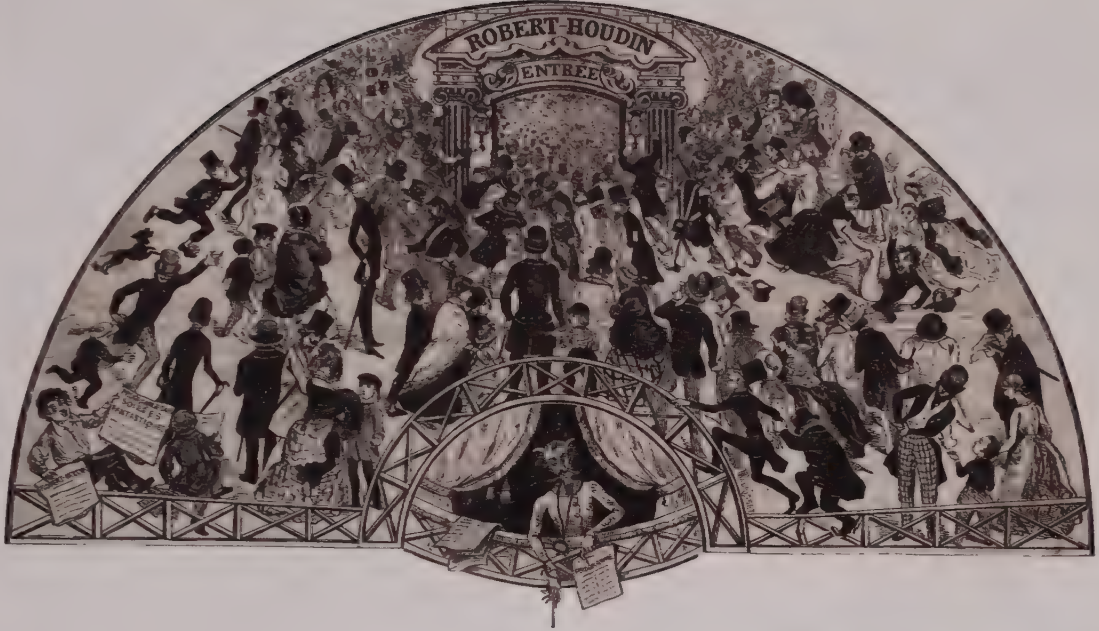
It's ironic that magicians, who so lovingly nurtured film in its infancy, were among the many who later suffered under its all-consuming success. Today, with Méliès's groundbreaking 1902 film *A Trip to the Moon* being overwhelmed by George Lucas's equally revolutionary *Star Wars*, it is perhaps worth noting what the great filmmaker Ingmar Bergman wrote about his first film projector: "This little rickety machine was my first conjuring set. And even today I remind myself with childish excitement that I am really a conjurer, since cinematography is based on deception of the human eye."

Magicians and scientists alike spend their lives confronting the laws of nature. A magician's goal is to defy those laws, while the scientist's goal is to explain them. Each faces the same problem: making sense out of the mysterious. It doesn't take an Einstein to understand this simple truth, but, ironically, it was Albert Einstein who described it best: "The most beautiful thing we can experience is the mysterious. It is the source of all true art and all science. He to whom this emotion is a stranger, who can no longer pause to wonder and stand rapt in awe, is as good as dead."

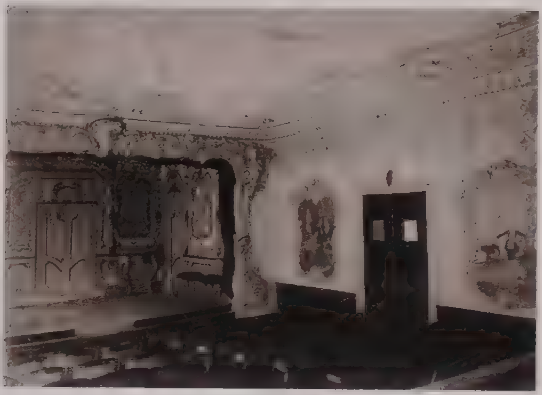
OPPOSITE: **ca. 1880** This stock print of a magician shows a typical stage setting featuring a variety of standard tricks, such as the production of birdcages, bottom center, that by this time were being manufactured by numerous companies. Generic images like this could be used by a large number of performers.

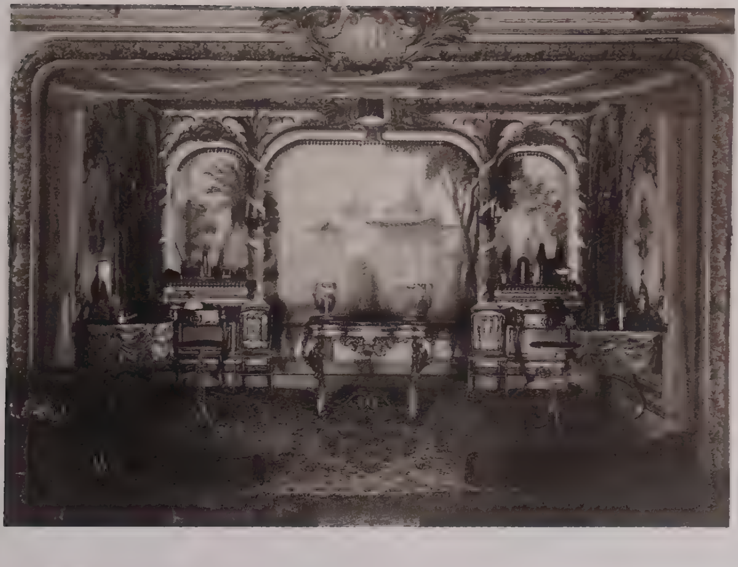
ABOVE: **ca. 1850** While not particularly original, Joseph Jacobs was a fine entertainer who featured magic, ventriloquism, and improvisational verses. He became Anderson's foremost competitor in England as each crowded the stage with vast quantities of apparatus. Shown here is one of his featured tricks, wherein a comedic boy assistant was concealed under a large cone and, at the report of the magician's gun, the boy was transformed into a goose.

LE VO
ROBERT HOUDIN
ISAKOF
ISAKOF



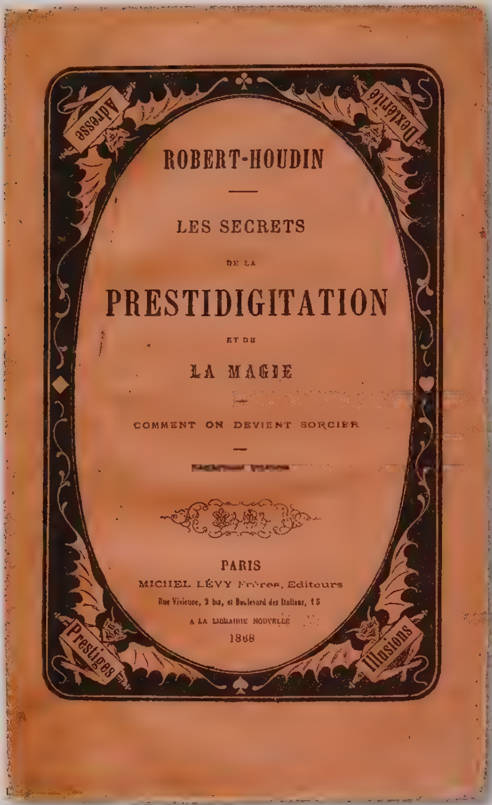
ABOVE: **ca. 1850s** Today, more than 160 years after he opened his magic theater in Paris, Robert-Houdin is still regarded as the father of modern magic. This artwork, from the top of a program, shows crowds of people flocking to the entrance of this famous theater.





LEFT AND CENTER RIGHT: **1888 and 1901** In 1888 the budding magician and filmmaker Georges Méliès purchased the slightly rundown Theatre Robert-Houdin and completely refurbished the interior. These two rare photographs provide a glimpse of the intimate stage fully set for the next performance, left, and about 10 years later, center right.

OPPOSITE: **ca. 1880** Visible in the center of this photograph taken in Paris are the words Robert-Houdin, marking one of the most famous theater addresses in the history of magic. Upstairs were the separate studios of the famous photographer André-Adolphe-Eugène Disdéri and motion-picture pioneer Louis Lumière.

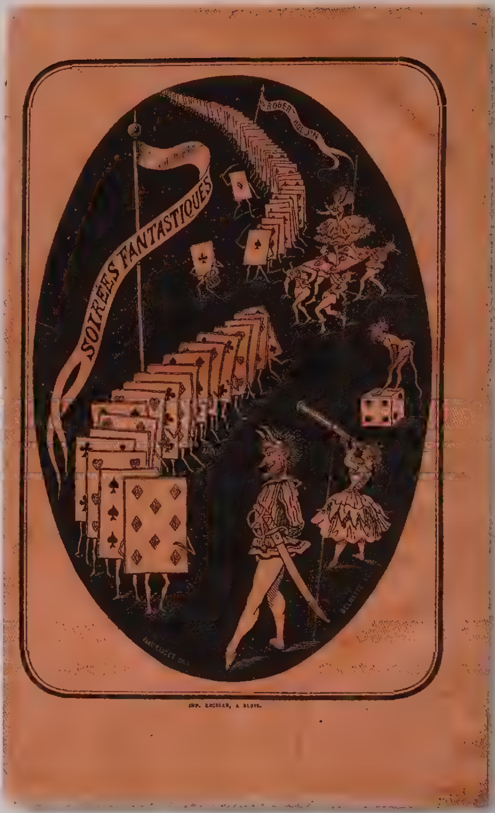

Adresse
Dextérité
Prestiges
Illusions

ROBERT-HOUDIN

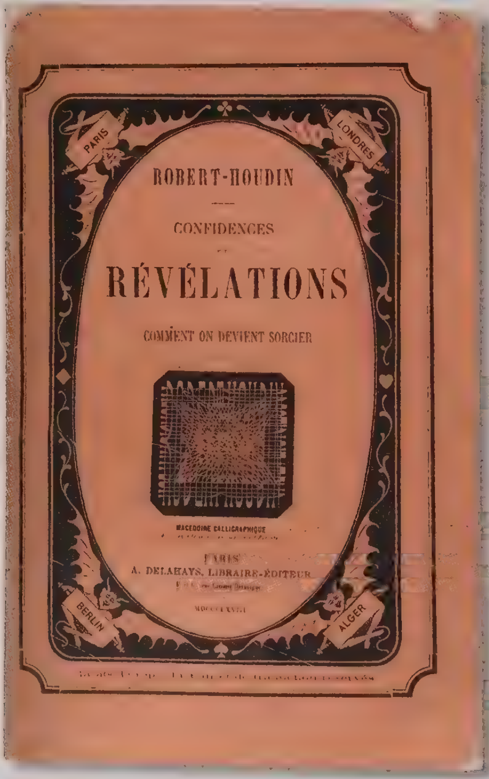
LES SECRETS
DE LA
PRESTIDIGITATION
ET DE
LA MAGIE

COMMENT ON DEVIENT SORCIER

PARIS
MICHEL LÉVY Frères, Editeurs
Rue Vivienne, 2 bis, et Boulevard des Italiens, 15
A LA LIBRAIRIE NOUVELLE
1868


ROBERT-HOUDIN
SOIRÉES FANTASTIQUES

IMP. LECESNE, A BLOIS.


PARIS
LONDRES
BERLIN
ALGER
ROBERT-HOUDIN

ROBERT-HOUDIN

CONFIDENCES
ET
RÉVÉLATIONS

COMMENT ON DEVIENT SORCIER

MACÉDOINE CALLIGRAPHIQUE

PARIS
A. DELAHAYS, LIBRAIRE-ÉDITEUR

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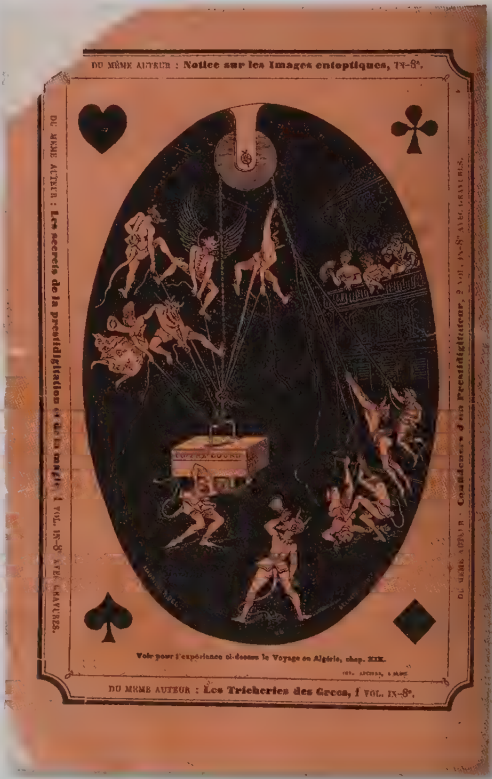


DU MÊME AUTEUR : Notice sur les Images entoptiques, in-8°.

DU MÊME AUTEUR : Les secrets de la prestidigitation et de la magie, 1 vol. in-8° avec gravures.

DU MÊME AUTEUR : Confidences d'un Prestidigitateur, 2 vol. in-8° avec gravures.

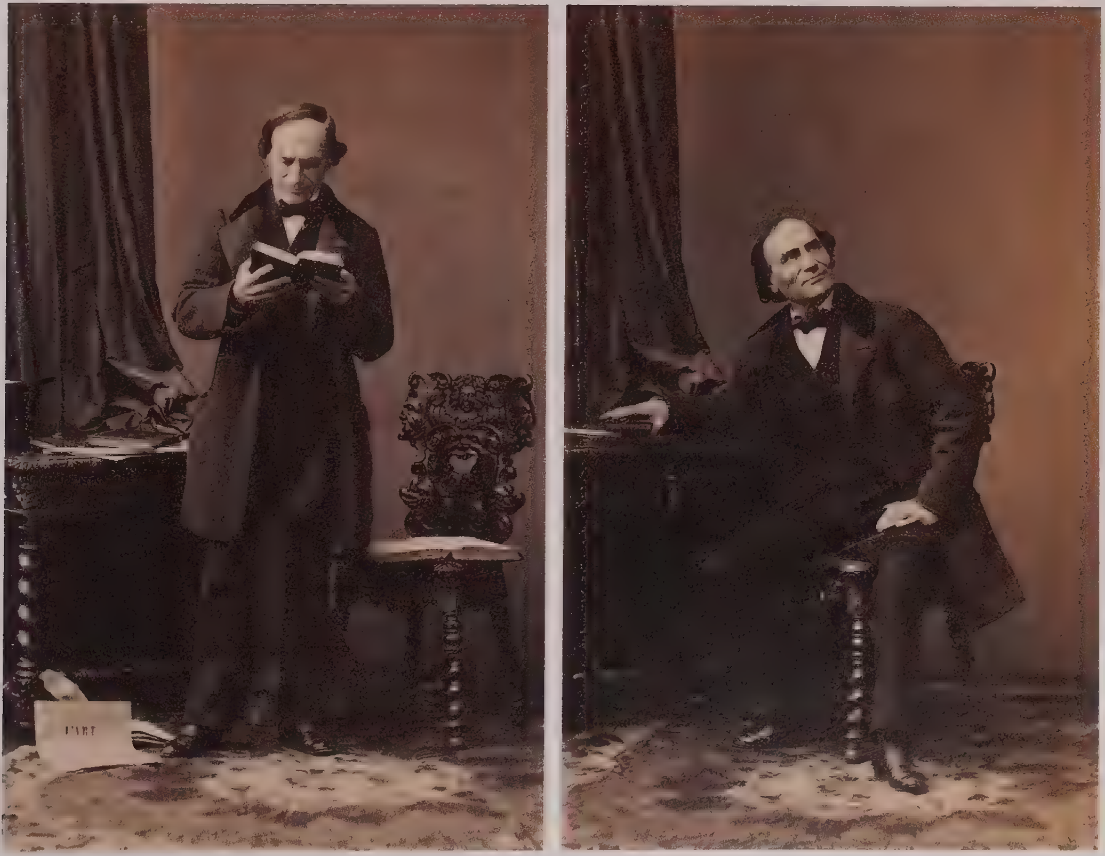
Voir pour l'expérience ci-dessus le Voyage en Algérie, chap. XIX.

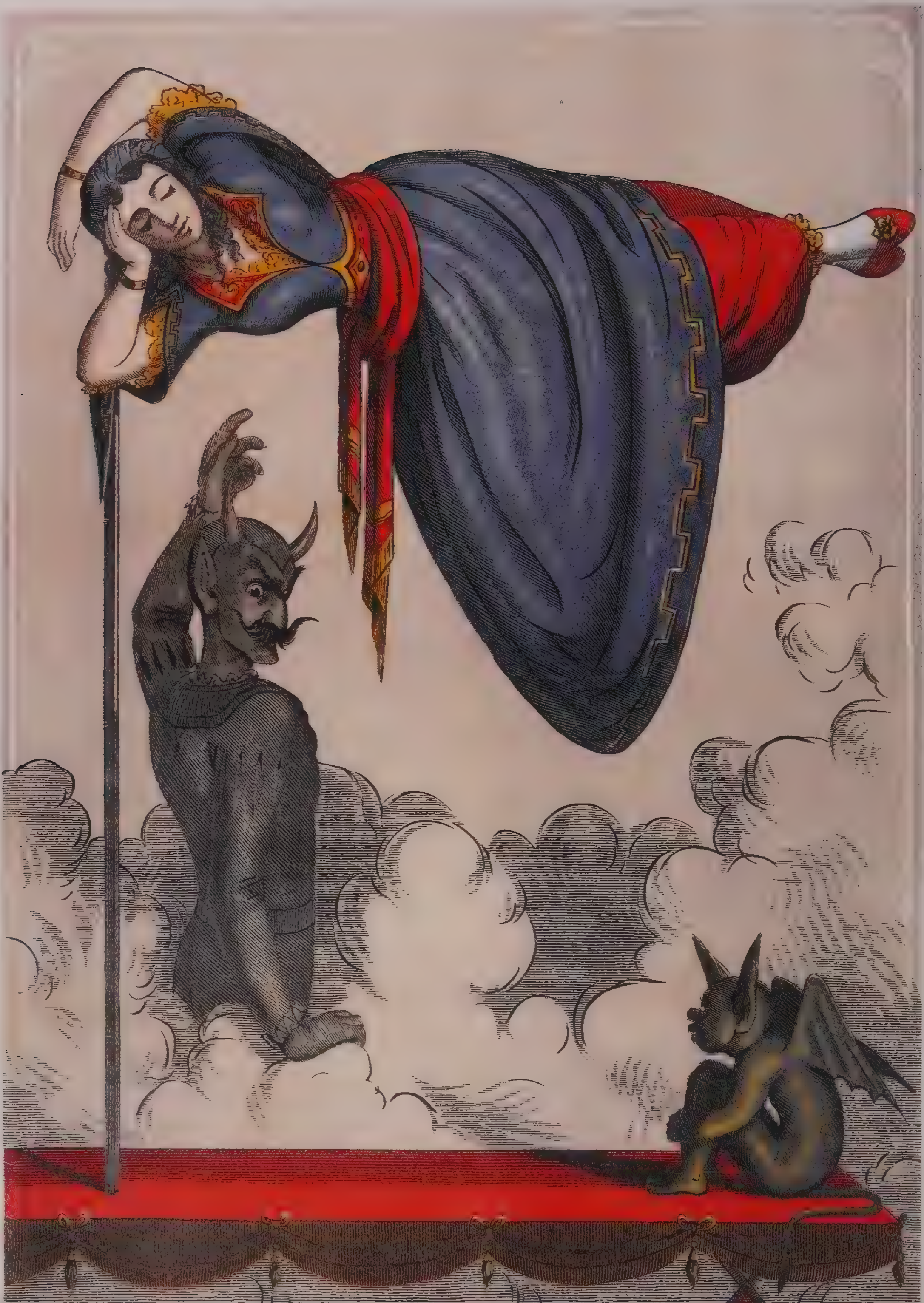
IMP. LECESNE, A BLOIS.

DU MÊME AUTEUR : Les Tricheries des Grecs, 1 vol. in-8°.

OPPOSITE: **1868** The pair of images at top is of Robert-Houdin's personal copy of his important textbook on magic, *Les secrets de la prestidigitation et de la magie* (*The Secrets of Conjuring and Magic*). His memoir, *Confidences et révélations*, bottom, was published in English as *Memoirs of Robert-Houdin*. On the back cover is a fanciful depiction of his famous Light and Heavy Chest, a trick that single-handedly averted a revolution in Algeria by upstaging local Marabout chieftains.

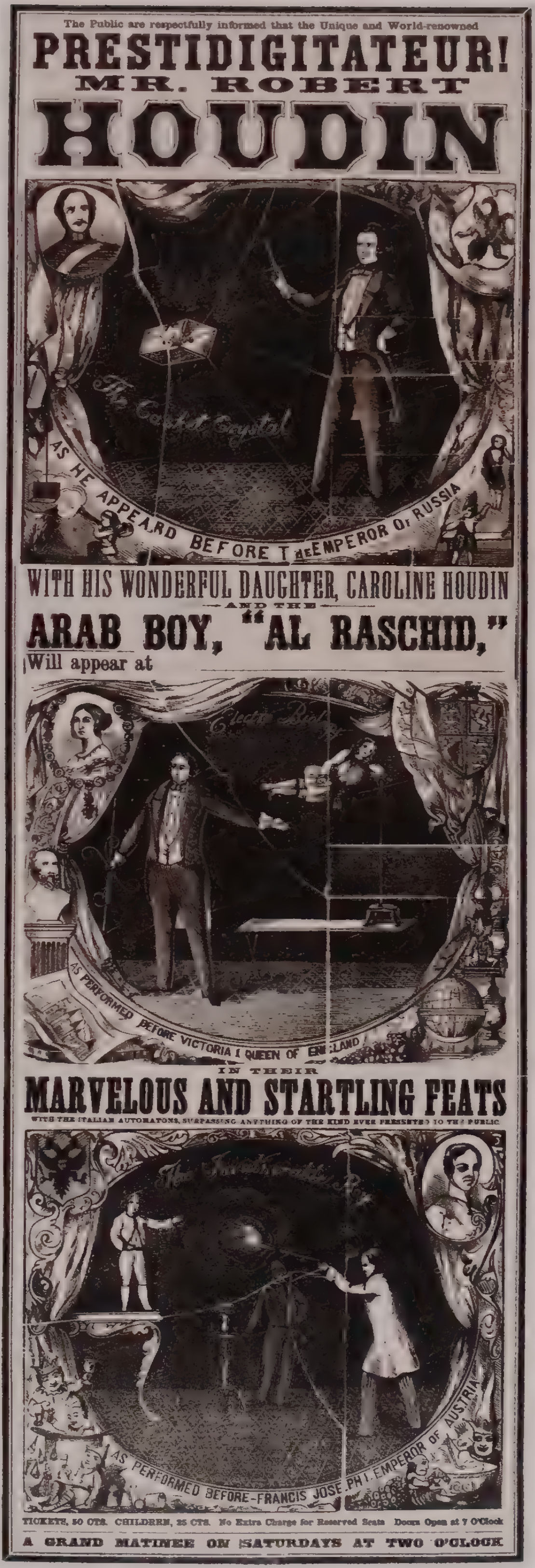
BELOW: **ca. 1860** These formal portraits of Robert-Houdin were taken by the famous photographer Disdéri in his studio, located just above the Theatre Robert-Houdin. Disdéri popularized the *carte de visite*, a technique whereby multiple images could be printed from a single glass negative, then cut up and glued to small mounts.





Warren, Johnson & Co., Designers, Engravers and Printers, 197 Main Street, Buffalo, OPPOSITE: **1879** Robert-Houdin's Ethereal Suspension quickly became a standard illusion among magicians on both sides of the Atlantic. This striking advertising image, produced in New York, was suitable for use by all performers who were presenting this popular effect.

RIGHT: **1865** Robert-Houdin's influence over modern magic extended far and wide. Here a magician in America is attempting to pass himself off as Mr. Robert Houdin by presenting at least two of Robert-Houdin's most recognizable tricks. The top image shows the Crystal Casket, and at center is Electro Biology, his version of Robert-Houdin's Ethereal Suspension.



The Public are respectfully informed that the Unique and World-renowned

PRESTIDIGITATEUR!

MR. ROBERT

HOUDIN

AS HE APPEARD BEFORE THE EMPEROR OF RUSSIA

WITH HIS WONDERFUL DAUGHTER, CAROLINE HOUDIN

AND THE

ARAB BOY, "AL RASCHID,"

Will appear at

AS PERFORMED BEFORE VICTORIA I QUEEN OF ENGLAND

IN THEIR

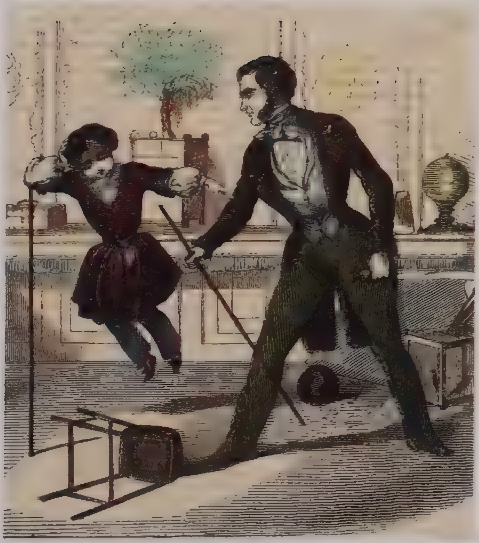
MARVELOUS AND STARTLING FEATS

WITH THE ITALIAN AUTOMATONS, SURPASSING ANYTHING OF THE KIND EVER PRESENTED TO THE PUBLIC

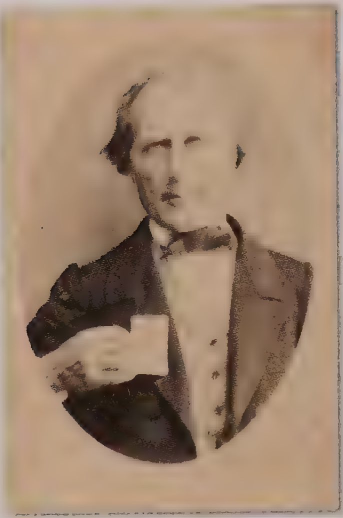
AS PERFORMED BEFORE-FRANCIS JOSEPH I. EMPEROR OF AUSTRIA

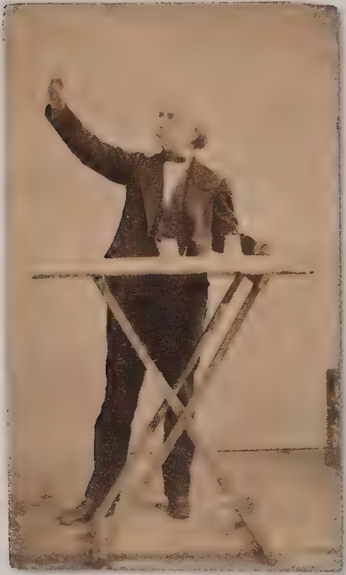
TICKETS, 50 CTS. CHILDREN, 25 CTS. No Extra Charge for Reserved Seats Doors Open at 7 O'Clock

A GRAND MATINEE ON SATURDAYS AT TWO O'CLOCK



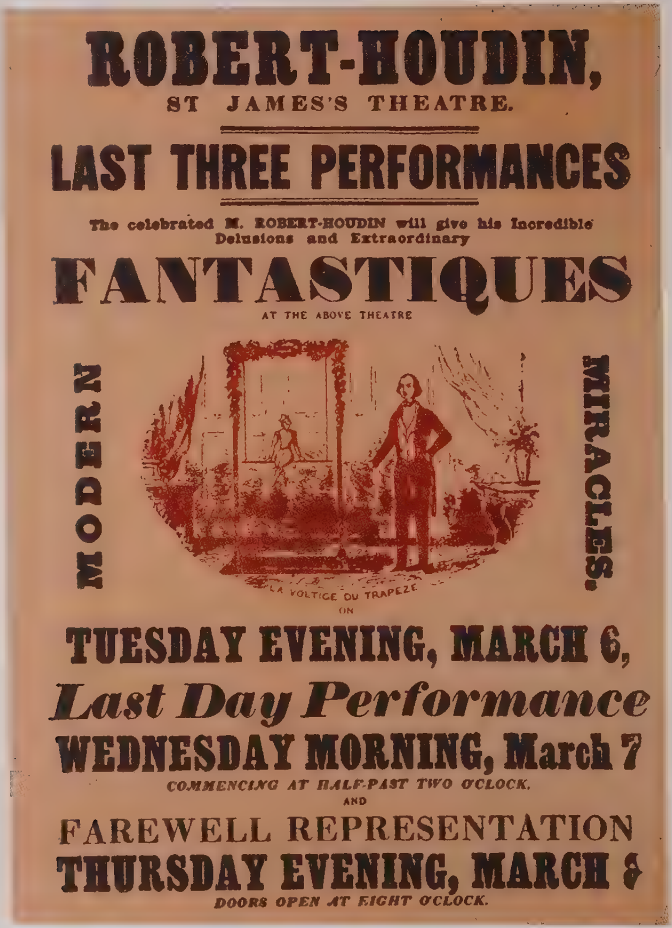
ABOVE: **ca. 1848** Robert-Houdin blurred the lines between magic, science, and mechanics, and audiences were never sure what they were seeing. He based this illusion on a new anesthetic called ether that came into use in the 1840s. After his six-year-old son inhaled the chemical, the boy was raised effortlessly into the air, where he rested, as if sleeping, on the top of a pole. A version of this illusion is still performed today.





LEFT: 1864 Robert-Houdin explained many of his tricks in a book called *The Secrets of Conjuring and Magic*. To assist the artist with the explanatory drawings, Robert-Houdin was photographed revealing his secrets. A drawing of this image never made it into the completed work that was finally published in 1868.

CENTER LEFT: 1864 Robert-Houdin performs one of the oldest tricks in magic, Cups and Balls, a trick that provides an accurate measure of a magician's sleight-of-hand skills. In contrast to his usual ornate apparatus, here the master uses the simplest of props on a street performer's table.



ROBERT-HOUDIN,
ST JAMES'S THEATRE.

LAST THREE PERFORMANCES

The celebrated M. ROBERT-HOUDIN will give his Incredible
Delusions and Extraordinary

FANTASTIQUES

AT THE ABOVE THEATRE

MODERN MIRACLES.

LA VOLTIGE DU TRAPEZE

ON

TUESDAY EVENING, MARCH 6,

Last Day Performance

WEDNESDAY MORNING, March 7

COMMENCING AT HALF-PAST TWO O'CLOCK.

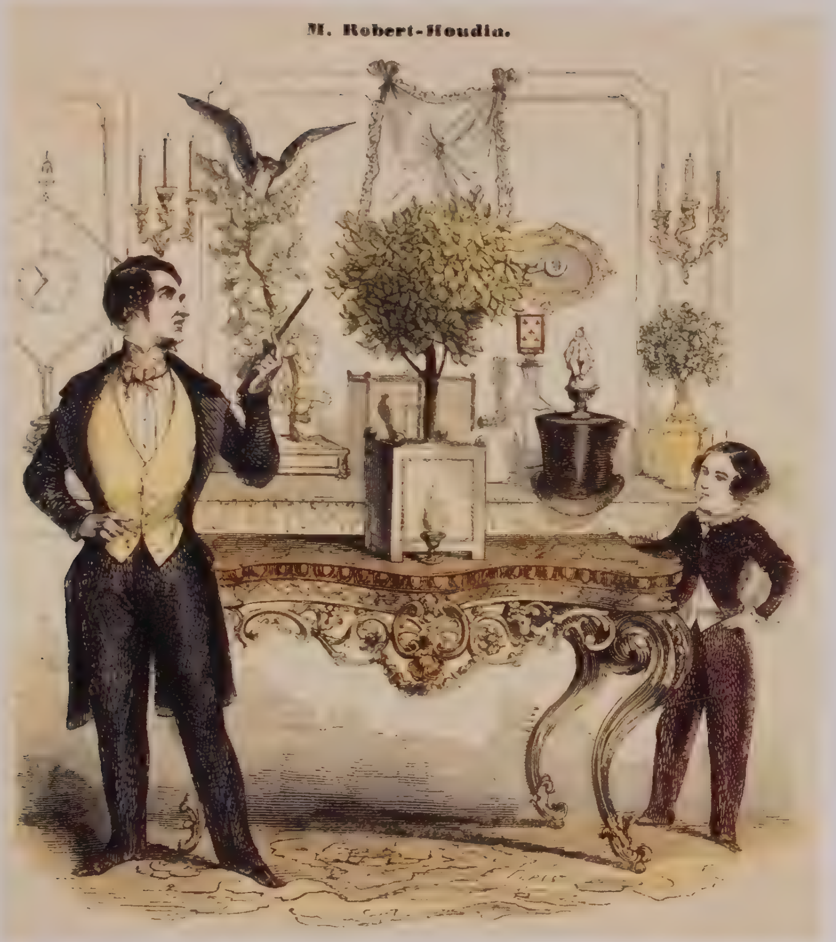
AND

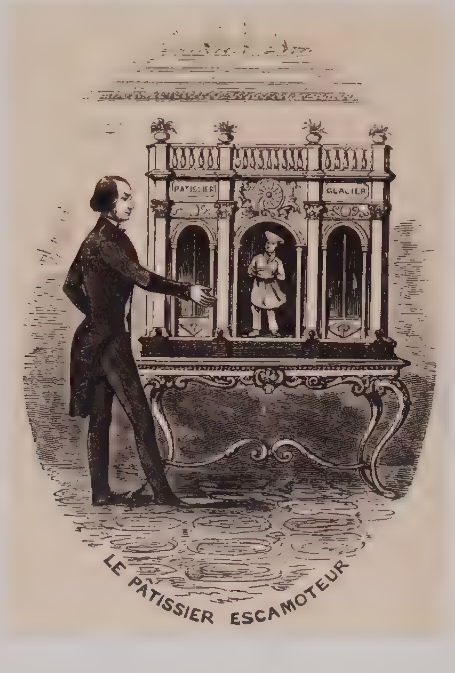
FAREWELL REPRESENTATION

THURSDAY EVENING, MARCH 8

DOORS OPEN AT EIGHT O'CLOCK.

RIGHT: 1849 Antonio Diavolo, the trapeze automaton, was one of Robert-Houdin's most popular features. Whether the audience believed they were witnessing a magic effect, a purely mechanical creation, or a combination of both, their reaction to his incredible acrobatics was one of total bewilderment.

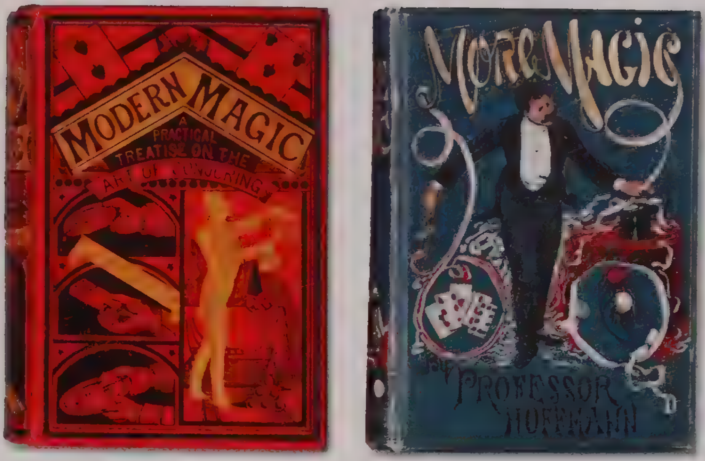

M. Robert-Houdin.



ABOVE: 1845 Robert-Houdin's Marvelous Orange Tree was a masterful combination of sleight of hand, mechanical magic, and an exquisitely crafted automaton. After a borrowed handkerchief was turned to dust, flowers bloomed on the tree, followed by real oranges. One orange split open, and two butterflies emerged, each holding a corner of the missing handkerchief.

RIGHT: 1848 One of Robert-Houdin's most popular effects, the Pastry Cook of the Palais-Royal involved a tiny chef who popped into his patisserie and reappeared a moment later with any dessert requested by an audience member. Audiences were unaware that Robert-Houdin's young son was concealed inside, making sure that the chef delivered the correct pastry. The final piece of cake contained a lady's ring that had disappeared earlier in the evening.

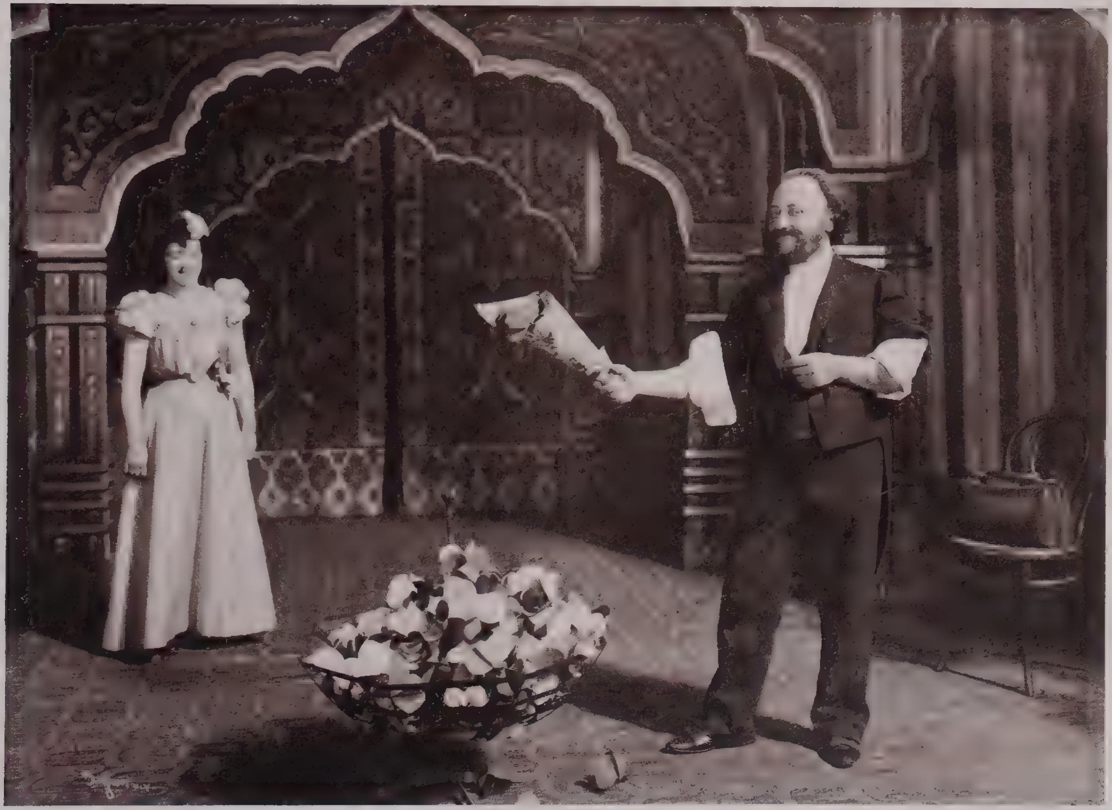
Marceau



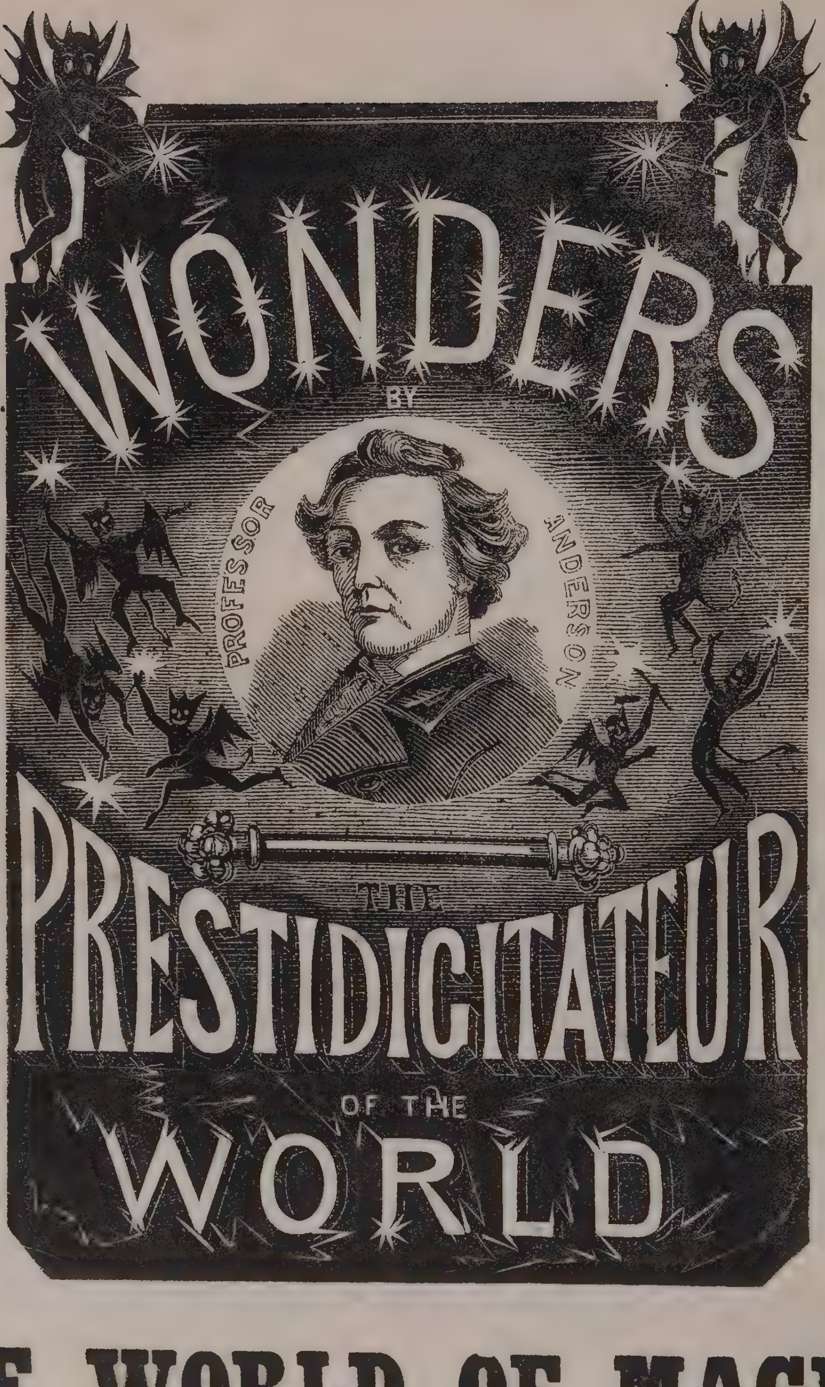
OPPOSITE: **ca. 1902** Buatier de Kolta was, like Robert-Houdin, one of magic's true geniuses. All of the effects in his act, which included the Vanishing Birdcage, Multiplying Billiard Balls, Paper Flowers from a Cone, and the astonishing Vanishing Lady, were his own original creations. These mysteries continue to baffle audiences today.

ABOVE: **1876 and 1890** When British barrister and amateur magician Angelo Lewis wrote *Modern Magic*, left, for the general public in 1876 under the name Professor Hoffmann, many magicians believed that it would ruin magic as a viable profession. In fact, it and his 1890 *More Magic*, right, were among those books that helped usher in what we now refer to as the golden age of magic.

BELOW: **ca. 1902** Photographed by the well-known New York theatrical photographer Joseph Byron, de Kolta, assisted by Miss Alice Allen, presents one of his trademark routines, Paper Flowers from a Cone. These "spring flowers" became popular with magicians worldwide, but not with their assistants, who spent hours backstage between shows carefully folding them up.



PROFESSOR


WONDERS
BY
PROFESSOR ANDERSON
THE
PRESTIDIGITATEUR
OF THE
WORLD

ANDERSON!

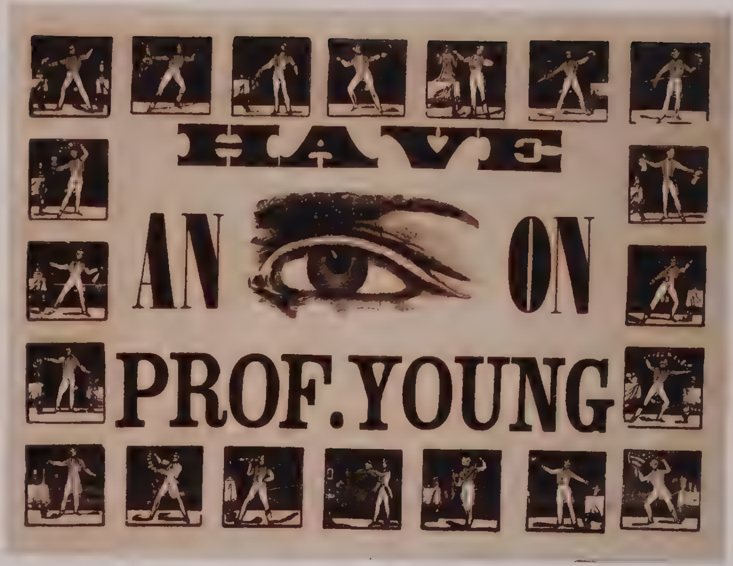
"THE WORLD OF MAGIC!"

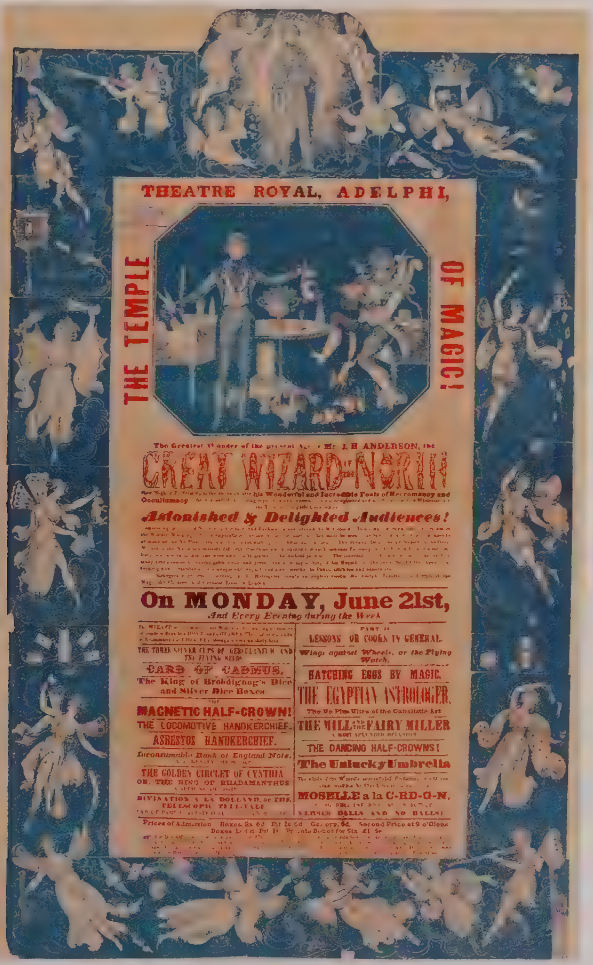
EVERY EVENING,

Also, SATURDAY AFTERNOON - - - - - At 3, P.

J. H. & F. F. Farwell Printing Establishment, 112 Washington Street, Boston.

RIGHT: **ca. 1860s** The *New York Herald* said of Professor William Henry Young, "Of all the magicians we have ever seen, Young alone deserves the title of great." The numerous woodcut prints that surround this enormous eye serve as a sort of flip book, illustrating his sleight-of-hand act.

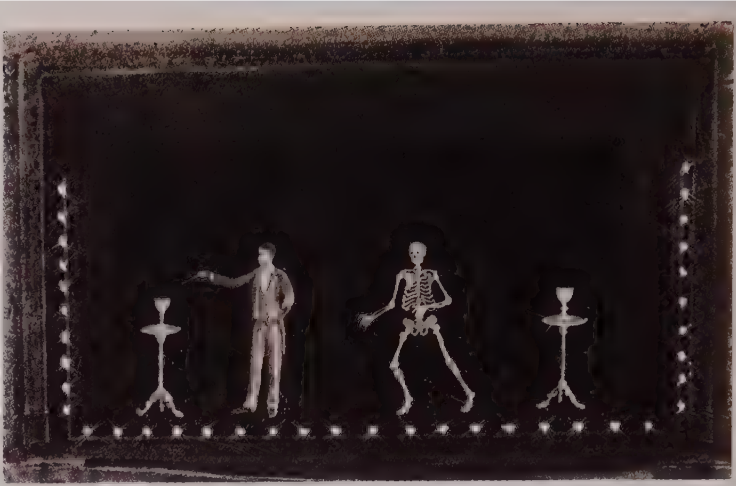

HAVE
AN
ON
PROF. YOUNG


THEATRE ROYAL, ADELPHI,
THE TEMPLE
OF MAGIC!
The Greatest Wonder of the present Age Mr. J. H. ANDERSON, the
GREAT WIZARD OF THE NORTH
his Wonderful and Incredible Feats of Necromancy and Occultomancy
Astonished & Delighted Audiences!
On MONDAY, June 21st,
And Every Evening during the Week
PART II
LESSONS OR COOKS IN GENERAL.
THE THREE SILVER CUPS OF HERCULANEUM AND THE FLYING SEEDS
Wings against Wheels, or the Flying Watch.
CARD OF CADMUS.
The King of Brobdignag's Dice and Silver Dice Boxes
HATCHING EGGS BY MAGIC.
THE EGYPTIAN ASTROLOGER.
The Ne Plus Ultra of the Cabalistic Art
MAGNETIC HALF-CROWN!
THE LOCOMOTIVE HANDKERCHIEF.
THE MILL AND THE FAIRY MILLER
ASBESTOS HANDKERCHIEF.
THE DANCING HALF-CROWNS!
Inconsumable Bank of England Note.
The Unlucky Umbrella
THE GOLDEN CIRCLET OF CYNTHIA OR, THE RING OF RHADAMANTHUS
MOSELLE a la C-RD-G-N.
DIVINATION A LA DOLLAND, OR THE TELESCOPIC TELL-TALE
VERSES BALLS AND NO BALLS!
Prices of Admission Boxes 2s. 6d. Pit 1s. 6d. Gallery, 6d. Second Price at 9 o'Clock Boxes 1s. 6d. Pit 1s. Private Boxes for Six £1 5s

OPPOSITE: **1864** Not satisfied with the "Great Wizard of the North" billing of his famous father, John Henry Anderson Jr. became "the Prestidigitateur of the World." A skilled magician, the younger Anderson never developed the showmanship his father displayed, though he did acquire his talent for bold and inventive advertising.

LEFT: **1841** Hailing from Scotland, John Henry Anderson dubbed himself "the Great Wizard of the North." His success relied on colorful and heavily illustrated handbills as well as other imaginative advertising ploys such as stenciling his name on sidewalks, embossing pats of butter served in hotels, and holding colorful street parades.

OPPOSITE: **ca. 1887** America's two greatest magicians at the time, Harry Kellar and Alexander Herrmann, were not above stealing the principle of Black Art. Herrmann produced a dramatic sketch that climaxed with the decapitation of his wife, Adelaide. He described this illusionary playlet as containing "Ancient and Modern Magic."

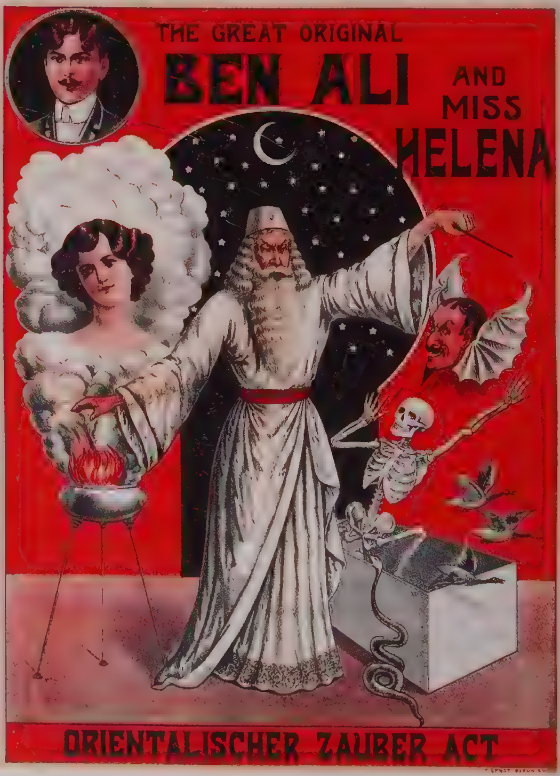


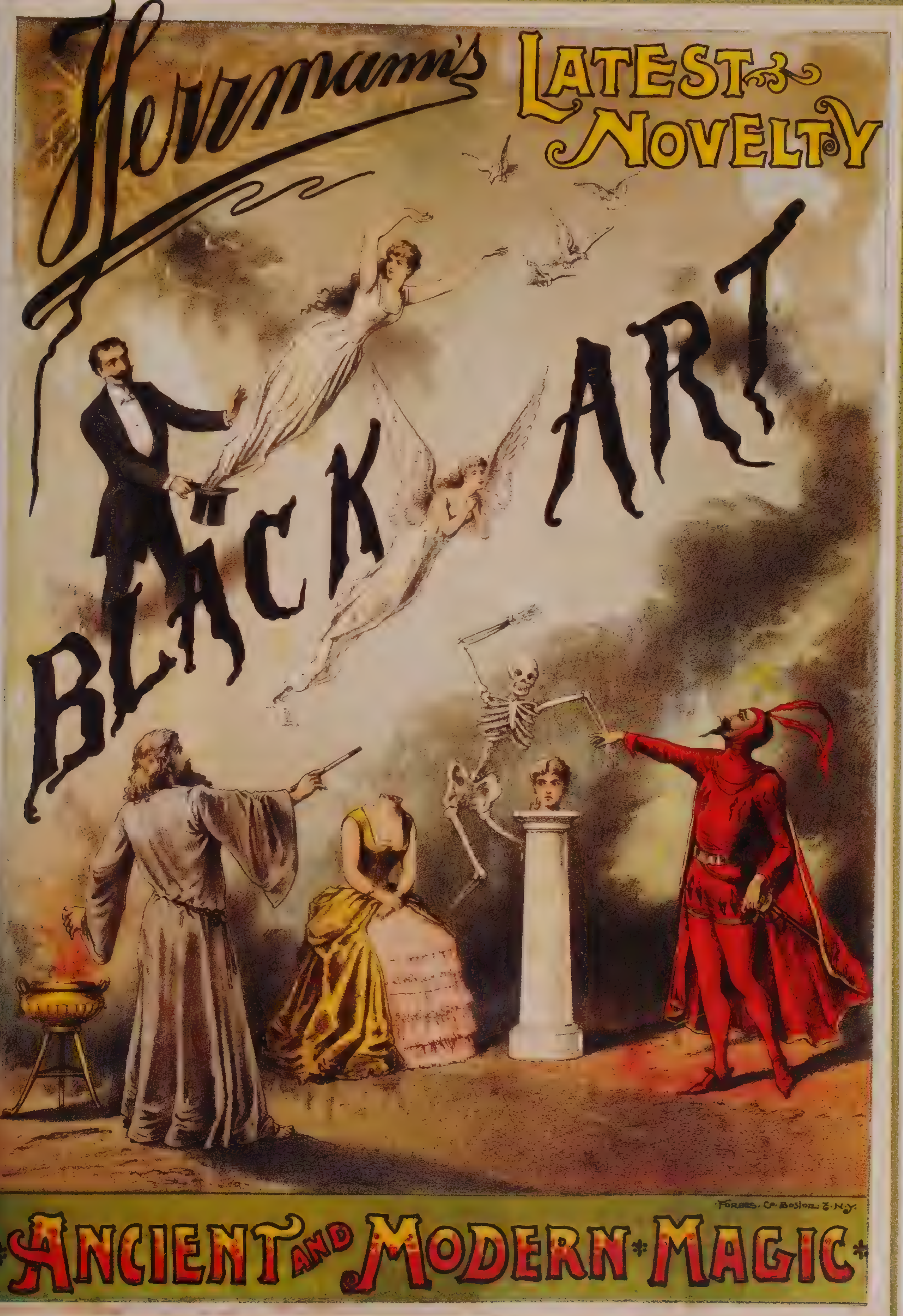
LEFT: **ca. 1885** Max Auzinger, a German magician who performed under the name Ben Ali Bey, is credited with creating an illusionary technique called Black Art. This revolutionary magic principle allowed virtually any object to appear or vanish at the snap of a finger or float effortlessly through the air. Magicians throughout the world quickly copied this clever yet simple principle.

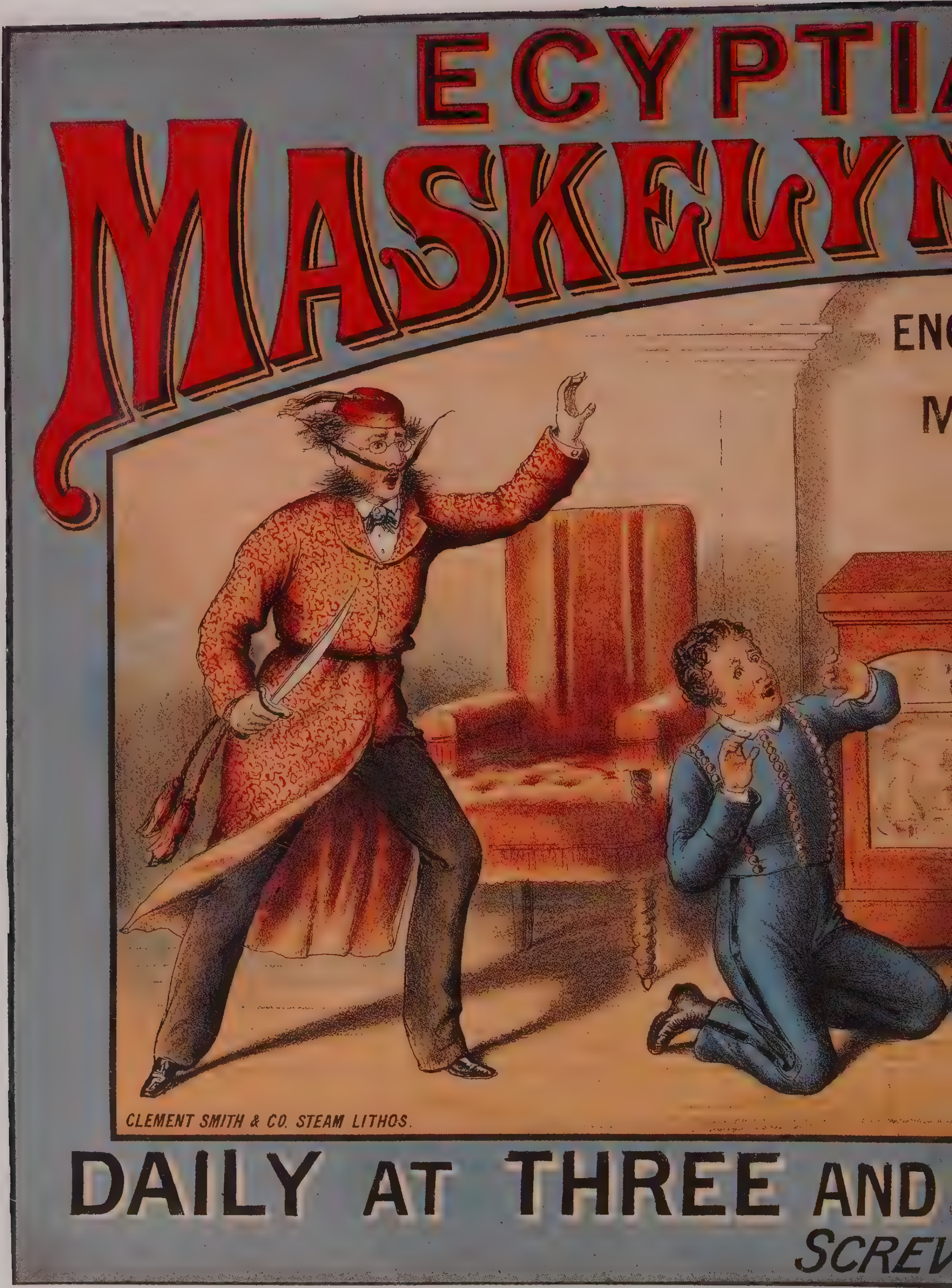
ABOVE: **1897** This illustration from Albert Hopkins's *Magic: Stage Illusions and Scientific Diversions* shows the basic elements of a Black Art act. The surrounding dazzler lights, aimed toward the audience, prevent the spectators from seeing the modus operandi. The tables, goblets, and skeleton can instantly vanish, appear, or dance across the stage.

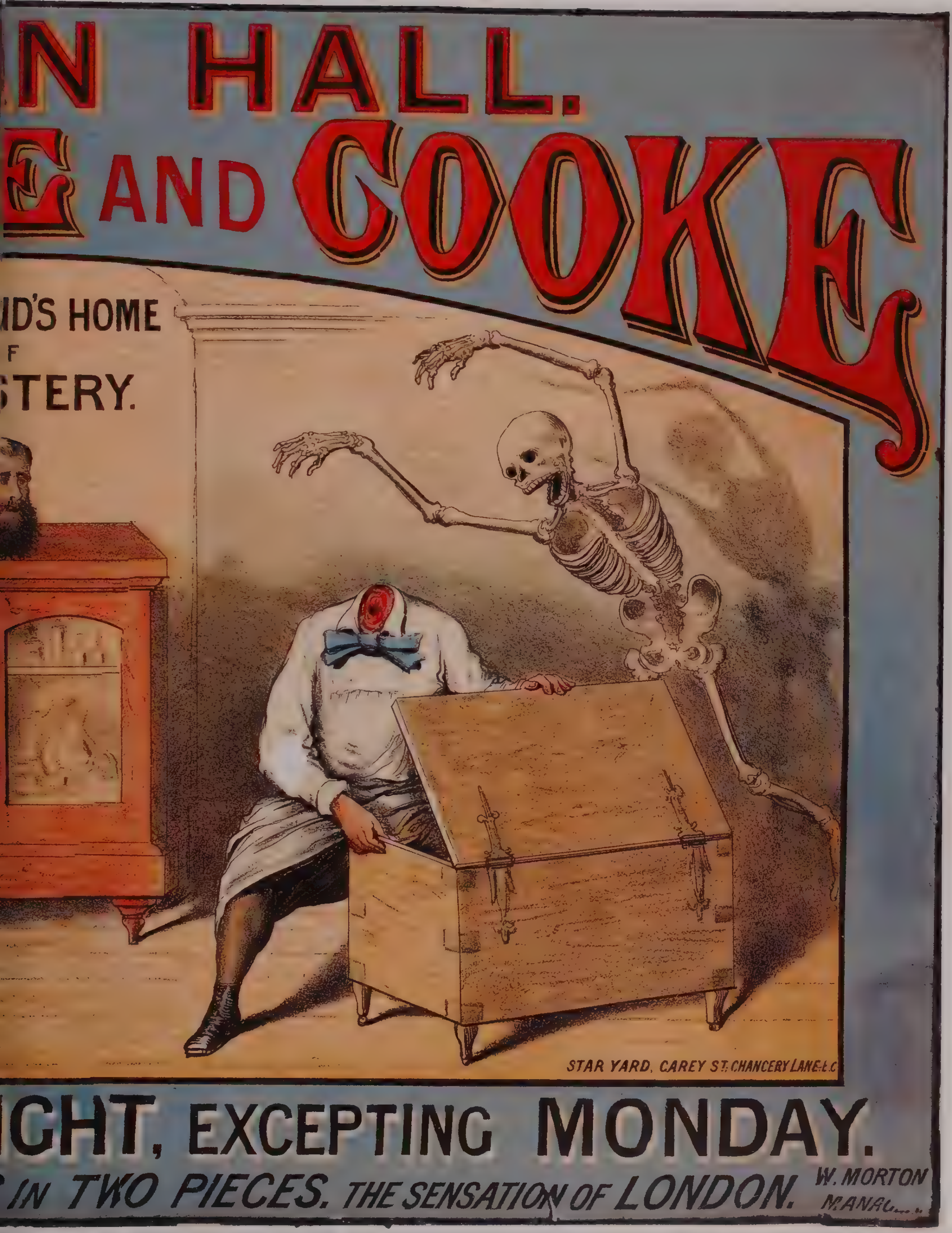
RIGHT: **ca. 1905** This is one of Auzinger's many Black Art copyists, most likely an Austrian named Hali, who brought his act to America, which would account for the English text on this poster. In any Black Art act, a white costume provides the greatest contrast and is thereby the most visible to the audience.

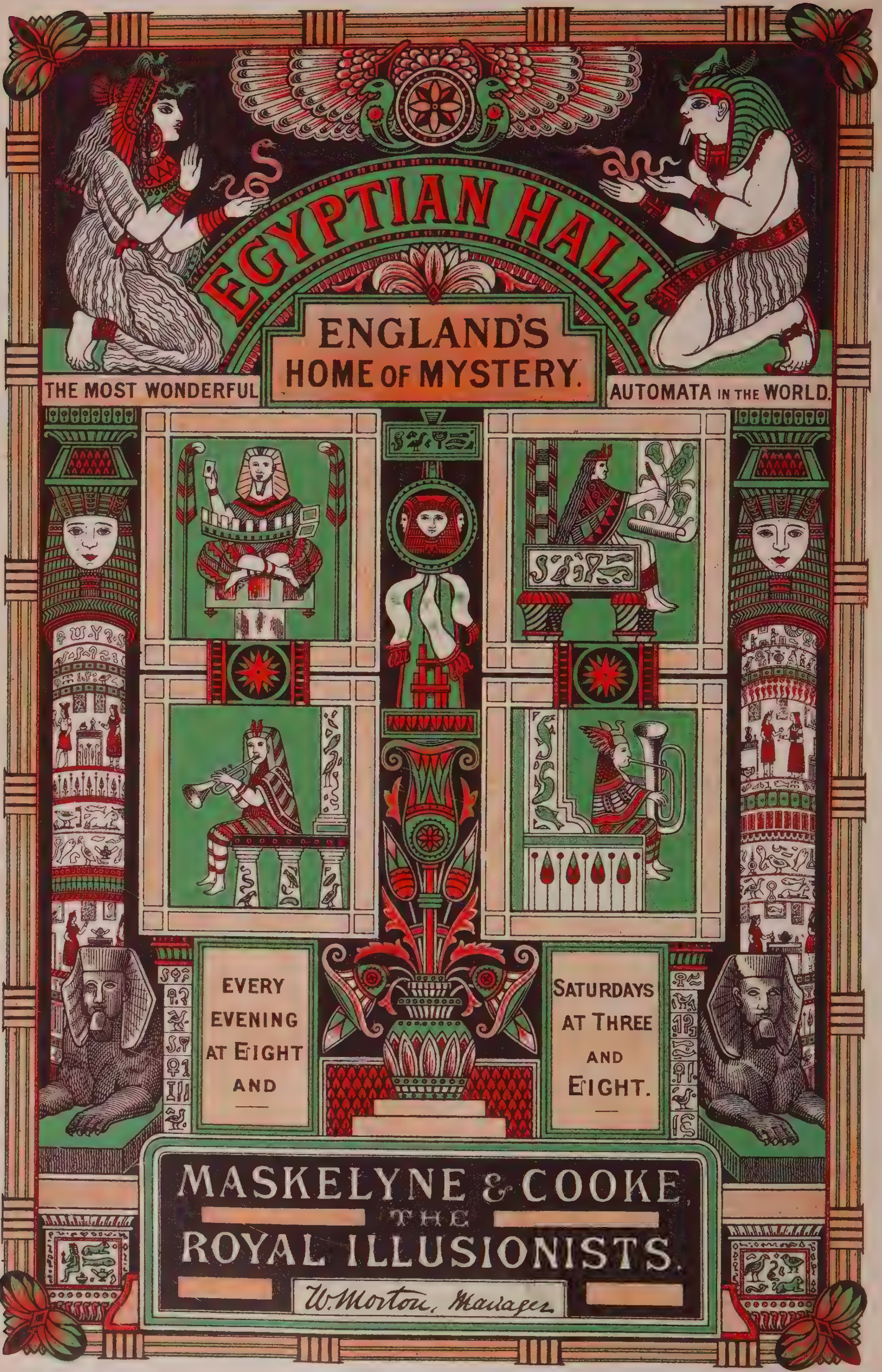
PAGES 164–165: **1879** During 30 years of performances, Maskelyne and Cooke's Egyptian Hall became one of London's most beloved theatrical enterprises. It was known to one and all as England's Home of Mystery. In this magical playlet, George Cooke had his head severed from his body twice daily, "at three and eight."




Herrmann's
LATEST NOVELTY
BLACK ART
FORBES. Co. BOSTON & N.Y.
ANCIENT AND MODERN MAGIC


EGYPTIA
MASKELYN
ENC
M
CLEMENT SMITH & CO. STEAM LITHOS.
DAILY AT THREE AND
SCREW


N HALL.
E AND COOKE
ID'S HOME
F
STERY.
STAR YARD, CAREY ST. CHANCERY LANE E.C
IGHT, EXCEPTING MONDAY.
IN TWO PIECES. THE SENSATION OF LONDON.
W. MORTON
MANAG...



EGYPTIAN HALL,

ENGLAND'S HOME OF MYSTERY.

THE MOST WONDERFUL AUTOMATA IN THE WORLD.

EVERY EVENING AT EIGHT AND

SATURDAYS AT THREE AND EIGHT.

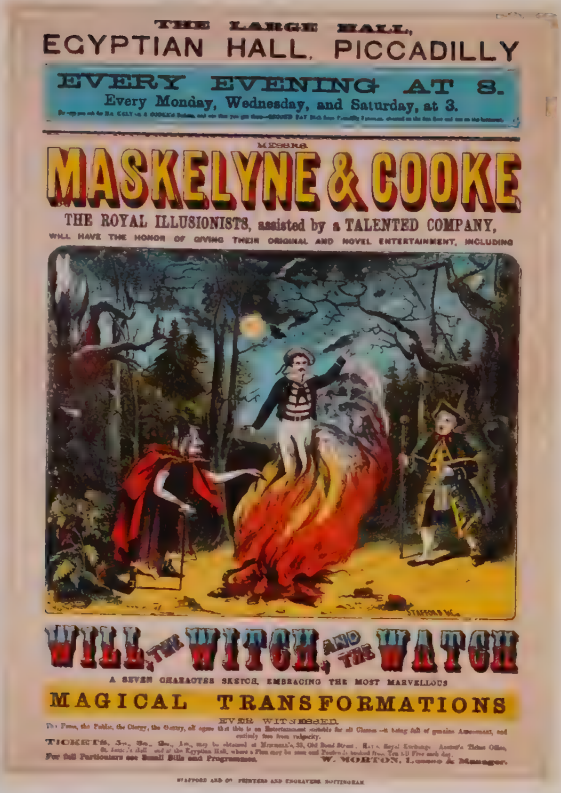
MASKELYNE & COOKE

THE

ROYAL ILLUSIONISTS.

W. Morton, Manager

BETTAM & BOLTON, 4 & 5, GEORGE YARD, WARDOUR ST W.



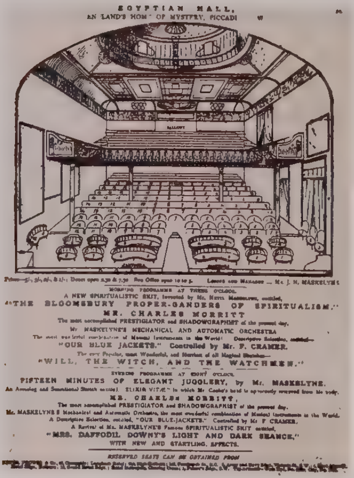
THE LARGE HALL,
EGYPTIAN HALL, PICCADILLY
EVERY EVENING AT 8.
Every Monday, Wednesday, and Saturday, at 3.

MESSRS
MASKELYNE & COOKE
THE ROYAL ILLUSIONISTS, assisted by a TALENTED COMPANY,
WILL HAVE THE HONOR OF GIVING THEIR ORIGINAL AND NOVEL ENTERTAINMENT, INCLUDING

WILL, THE WITCH, AND THE WATCH
A SEVEN CHARACTER SKETCH, EMBRACING THE MOST MARVELLOUS
MAGICAL TRANSFORMATIONS
EVER WITNESSED.
The Press, the Public, the Clergy, the Gentry, all agree that this is an Entertainment suitable for all Classes —it being full of genuine Amusement, and entirely free from vulgarity.
For full Particulars see Small Bills and Programmes.
W. MORTON, Lessee & Manager.

STAFFORD AND CO. PRINTERS AND ENGRAVERS NOTTINGHAM

LEFT: 1873 Beginning in the first year of Maskelyne and Cooke's residence at Egyptian Hall, their magical play *Will, the Witch, and the Watch* was performed. The play, being "full of genuine amusement and entirely free from vulgarity," was a whirlwind of disappearing and reappearing characters that became an audience favorite and was performed thousands of times over the next three decades.



EGYPTIAN HALL,
ENGLAND'S HOME OF MYSTERY, PICCADILLY

Prices—5/-, 3/-, 2/-, & 1/-; Doors open 2.30 & 7.30 Box Office open 10 to 5. Lessee and Manager ... Mr. J. N. MASKELYNE.

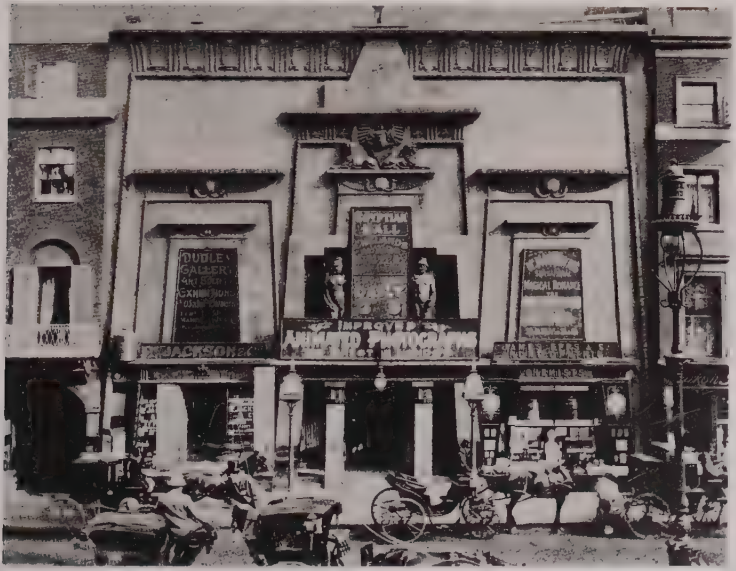
MORNING PROGRAMME AT THREE O'CLOCK.
A NEW SPIRITUALISTIC SKIT, invented by Mr. Nevil Maskelyne, entitled,
"THE BLOOMSBURY PROPER-GANDERS OF SPIRITUALISM."
MR. CHARLES MORRITT
The most accomplished PRESTIGIATOR and SHADOWGRAPHIST of the present day.
Mr. MASKELYNE'S MECHANICAL AND AUTOMATIC ORCHESTRA
The most wonderful combination of Musical Instruments in the World! Descriptive Selection, entitled—
"OUR BLUE JACKETS." Controlled by Mr. F. CRAMER.
The very Popular, most Wonderful, and Marvellous of all Magical Sketches—
"WILL, THE WITCH, AND THE WATCHMEN."

EVENING PROGRAMME AT EIGHT O'CLOCK.
FIFTEEN MINUTES OF ELEGANT JUGGLERY, by Mr. MASKELYNE.
An Amusing and Sensational Sketch entitled "ELIXIR VITÆ," in which Mr. Cooke's head is apparently removed from his body.
MR. CHARLES MORRITT,
The most accomplished PRESTIGIATOR and SHADOWGRAPHIST of the present day.
Mr. MASKELYNE'S Mechanical and Automatic Orchestra, the most wonderful combination of Musical Instruments in the World.
A Descriptive Selection, entitled, "OUR BLUE-JACKETS." Controlled by Mr. F. CRAMER.
A Revival of Mr. MASKELYNE'S Famous SPIRITUALISTIC SKIT entitled,
"MRS. DAFFODIL DOWNY'S LIGHT AND DARK SEANCE,"
WITH NEW AND STARTLING EFFECTS.

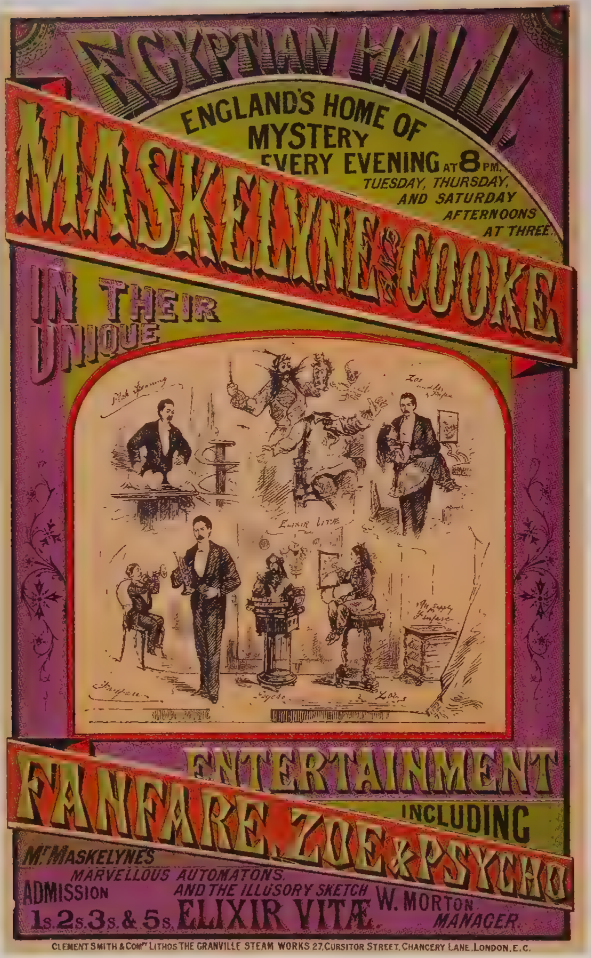
RESERVED SEATS CAN BE OBTAINED FROM

ABOVE: 1892 This broadside provides an unusual glimpse inside the auditorium of Egyptian Hall. The small upstairs theater seated between 200 and 300 patrons in upholstered chairs and couches at the front, followed by two rows of armchairs and then wooden benches with backrests.

OPPOSITE: ca. 1875 Maskelyne and Cooke carried over the Egyptian décor from the exterior of the building to this beautiful program cover. They employed, on a rotating basis, the greatest magicians in the world and presented a series of plays that featured a breathtaking array of original illusions.



LEFT: 1896 Designed as a museum in 1812 by William Bullock in an Egyptian style, Egyptian Hall's variety of differently sized rooms made it suitable for performances by traveling showmen. In 1873, John Nevil Maskelyne and George Cooke opened a magic show in the large Egyptian Hall and stayed for more than 30 years.



EGYPTIAN HALL.

ENGLAND'S HOME OF MYSTERY

EVERY EVENING AT 8 P.M.

TUESDAY, THURSDAY, AND SATURDAY AFTERNOONS AT THREE.

MASKELYNE AND COOKE

IN THEIR UNIQUE

ENTERTAINMENT

INCLUDING

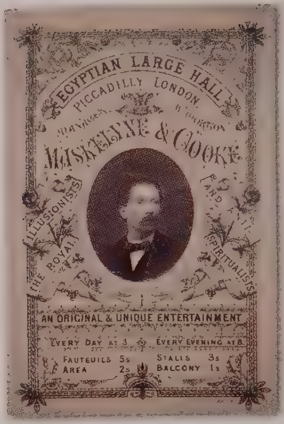
FANFARE, ZOE & PSYCHO

Mr MASKELYNE'S MARVELLOUS AUTOMATONS, AND THE ILLUSORY SKETCH ELIXIR VITÆ.

ADMISSION 1s. 2s. 3s. & 5s.

W. MORTON MANAGER.

CLEMENT SMITH & COMPY LITHOS THE GRANVILLE STEAM WORKS 27, CURSITOR STREET, CHANCERY LANE, LONDON, E.C.



EGYPTIAN LARGE HALL

PICCADILLY LONDON.

MASKELYNE & COOKE

THE ROYAL ILLUSIONISTS AND ANTI-SPIRITUALISTS

AN ORIGINAL & UNIQUE ENTERTAINMENT

EVERY DAY AT 3 · EVERY EVENING AT 8.

FAUTEUILS 5s · STALLS 3s

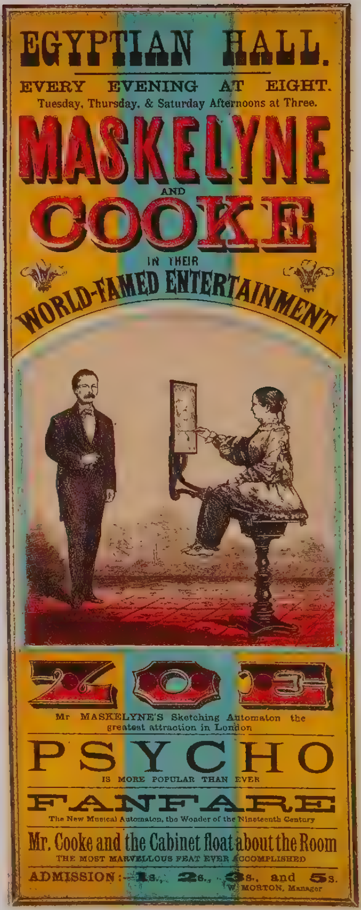
AREA 2s · BALCONY 1s

ABOVE AND RIGHT: 1878 The program cover above depicts Egyptian Hall automata. The most popular was the card player Psycho. Also pictured is a boy cornet player, Fanfare, and Zoe, a girl who could draw. Like Psycho, Zoe was part automaton and part illusion. Audiences suspected someone was inside, but Maskelyne showed them the interior, blurring the line between magic and science.

ABOVE RIGHT: ca. 1890 The famous magician and inventor John Nevil Maskelyne, pictured on the cover of this Egyptian Hall program, created a perfect environment for himself with his permanent magic theater and workshop, where dozens of diabolical illusions were created during his long tenure as proprietor.

OPPOSITE: 1873 This playbill is from Maskelyne and Cooke's first season at Egyptian Hall. Henry Collard was a young tenor who stood just 42 inches tall. Pictured is one of the earliest versions ever of the classic Floating Lady, an effect that Maskelyne would eventually refine into a perfect mystery.

PAGES 170–171: 1885 In the illusion pictured in this poster, a woman reclined in a hammock; when the hammock was lowered, she remained suspended in midair. This was the first version of John Nevil Maskelyne's levitation, which would later be recognized as one of the greatest illusions ever invented.



EGYPTIAN HALL.

EVERY EVENING AT EIGHT.

Tuesday, Thursday, & Saturday Afternoons at Three.

MASKELYNE AND COOKE

IN THEIR WORLD-FAMED ENTERTAINMENT

ZOE

Mr MASKELYNE'S Sketching Automaton the greatest attraction in London

PSYCHO

IS MORE POPULAR THAN EVER

FANFARE

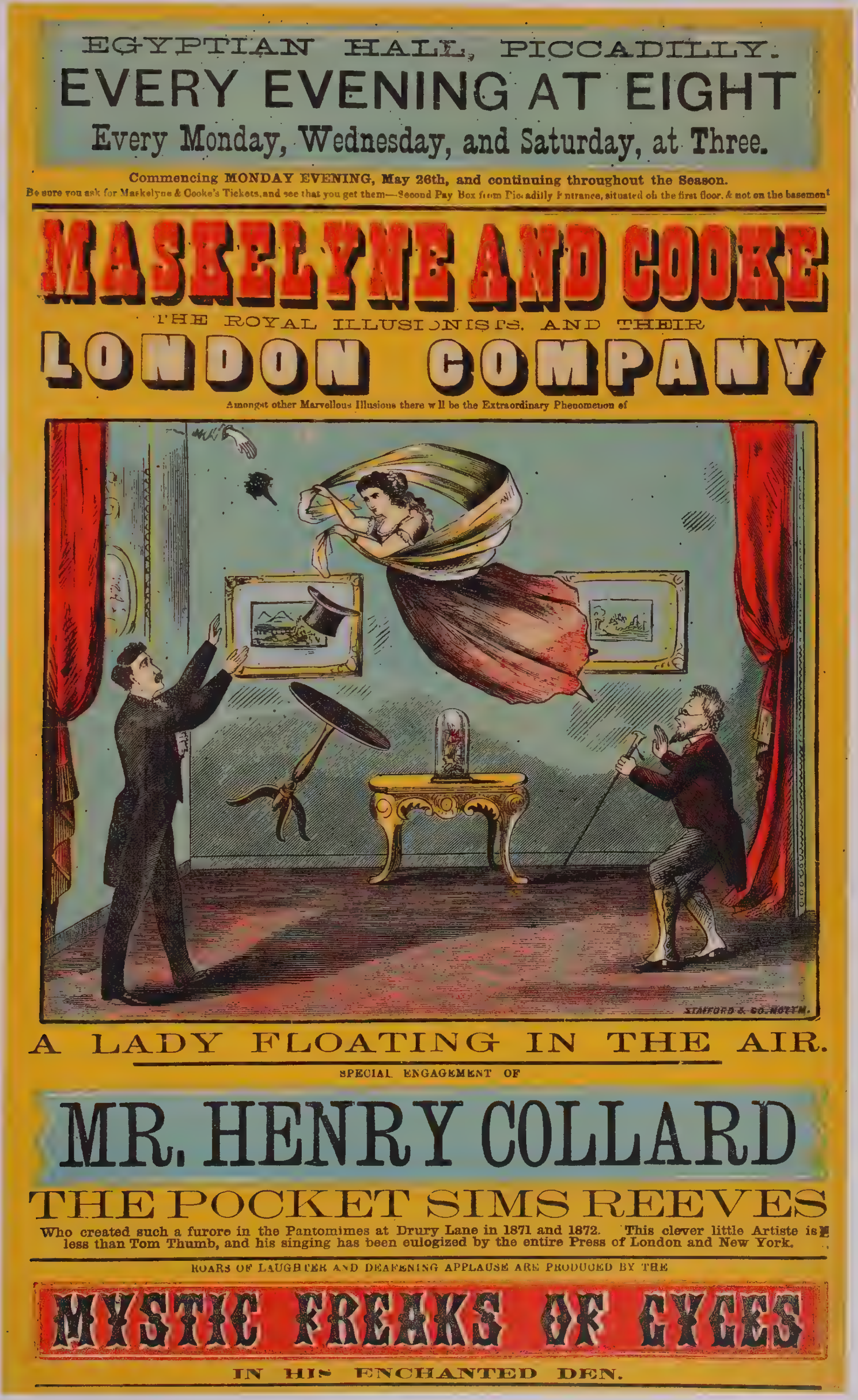
The New Musical Automaton, the Wonder of the Nineteenth Century

Mr. Cooke and the Cabinet float about the Room

THE MOST MARVELLOUS FEAT EVER ACCOMPLISHED

ADMISSION:—1s., 2s., 3s., and 5s.

W. MORTON, Manager



EGYPTIAN HALL, PICCADILLY.

EVERY EVENING AT EIGHT

Every Monday, Wednesday, and Saturday, at Three.

Commencing **MONDAY EVENING, May 26th,** and continuing throughout the Season.

Be sure you ask for Maskelyne & Cooke's Tickets, and see that you get them—Second Pay Box from Piccadilly Entrance, situated on the first floor, & not on the basement

MASKELYNE AND COOKE

THE ROYAL ILLUSIONISTS, AND THEIR

LONDON COMPANY

Amongst other Marvellous Illusions there will be the Extraordinary Pheuomeuon of

A LADY FLOATING IN THE AIR.

SPECIAL ENGAGEMENT OF

MR. HENRY COLLARD

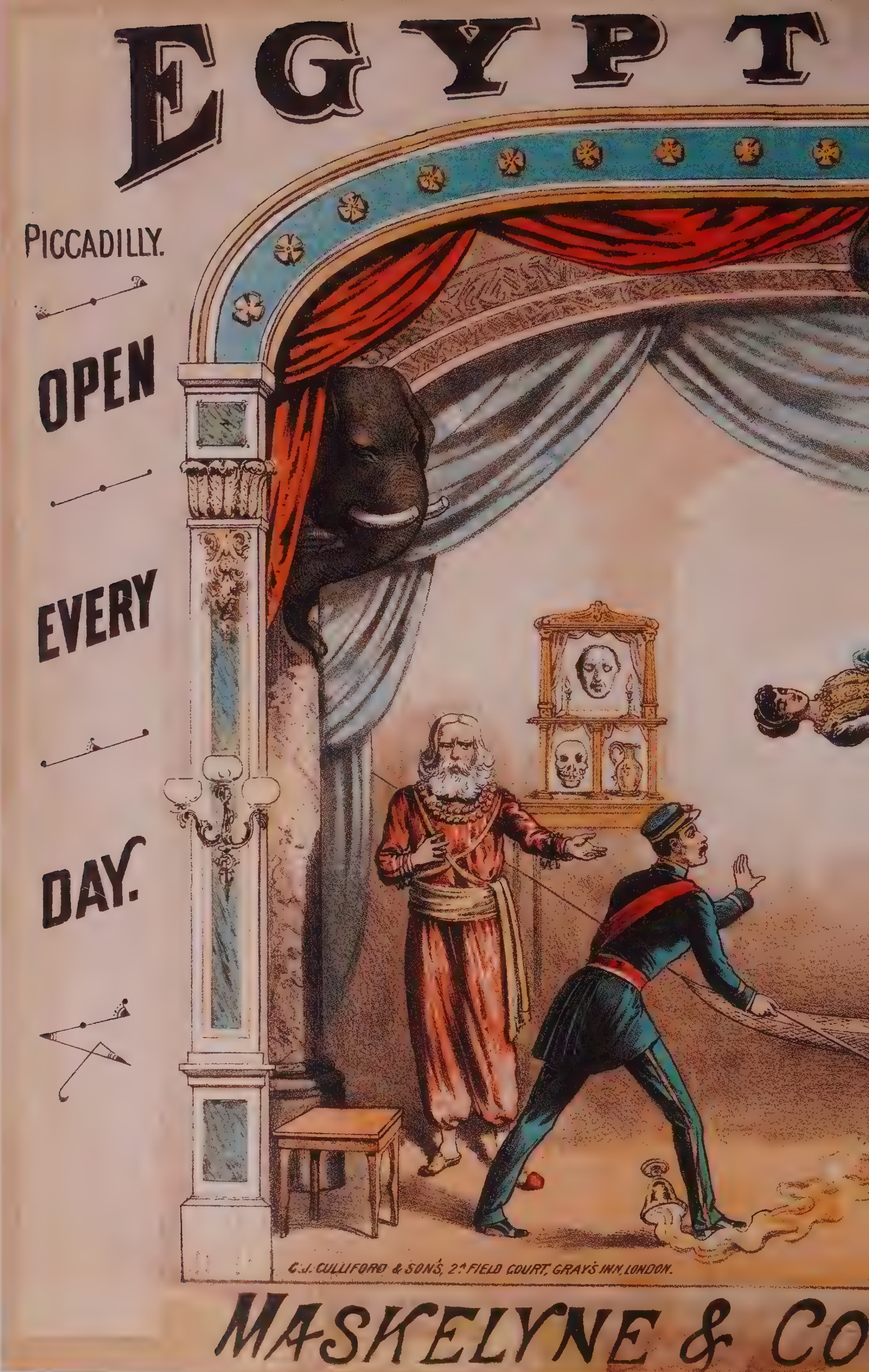
THE POCKET SIMS REEVES

Who created such a furore in the Pantomimes at Drury Lane in 1871 and 1872. This clever little Artiste is less than Tom Thumb, and his singing has been eulogized by the entire Press of London and New York.

ROARS OF LAUGHTER AND DEAFENING APPLAUSE ARE PRODUCED BY THE

MYSTIC FREAKS OF GYGES

IN HIS ENCHANTED DEN.


EGYPT
PICCADILLY.
OPEN
EVERY
DAY.
C.J. CULLIFORD & SONS, 2A FIELD COURT, GRAY'S INN, LONDON.
MASKELYNE & CO

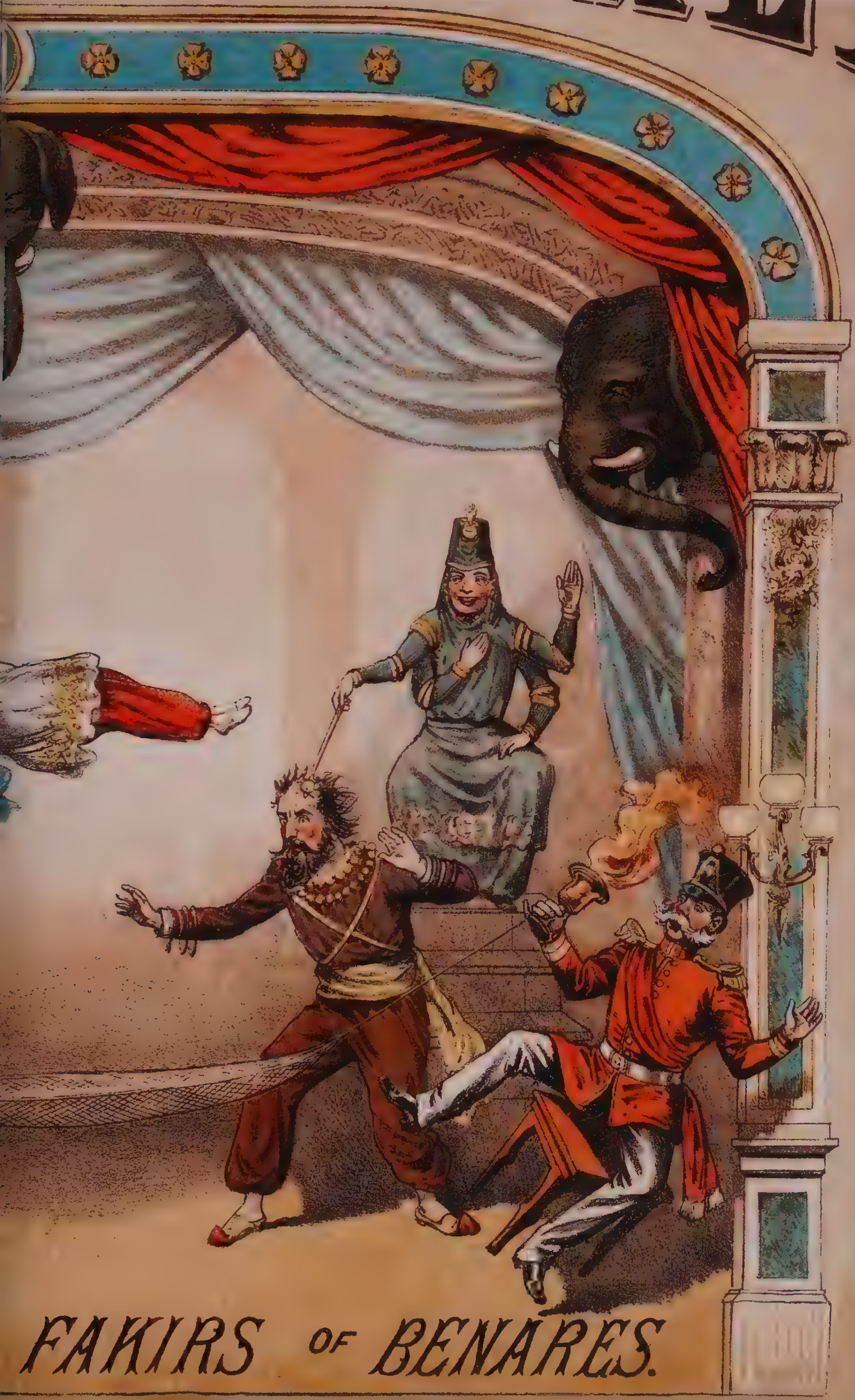
AN HALL

PICCADILLY.

SEE

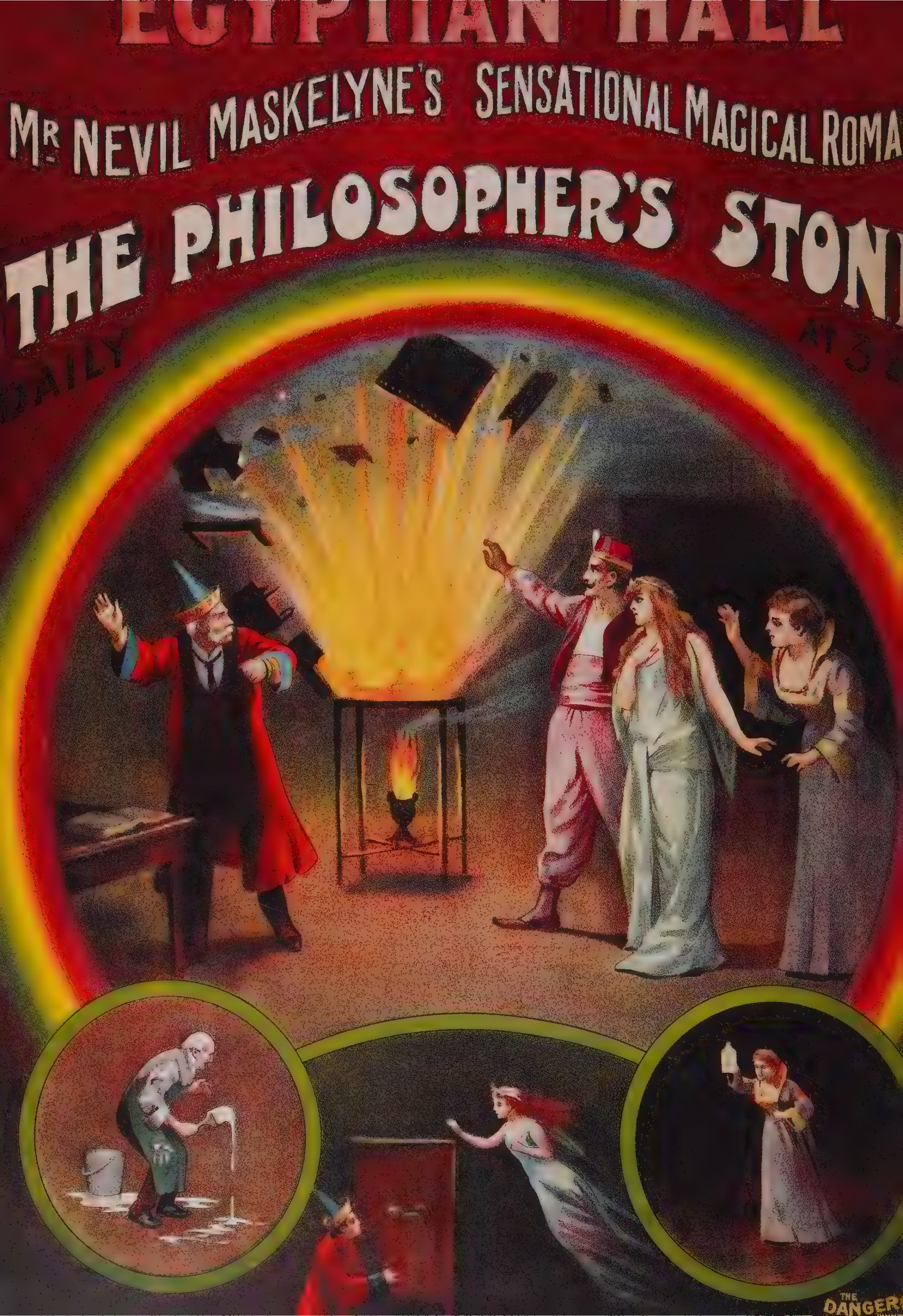
NEWS

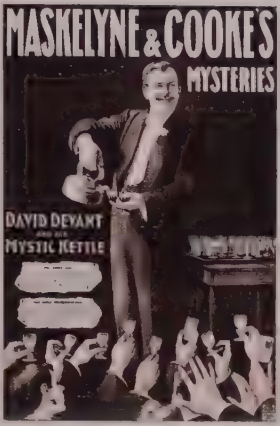
PAPERS



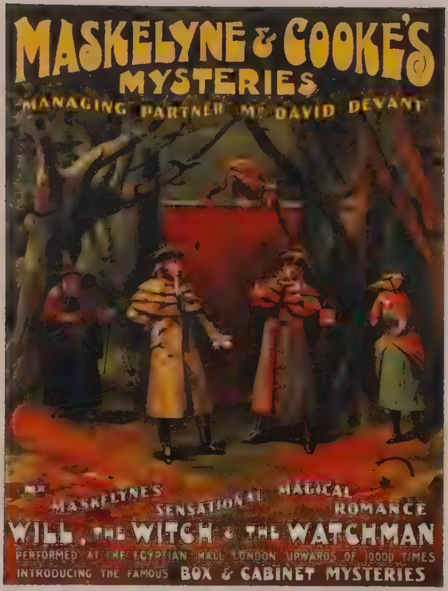
FAKIRS OF BENARES.

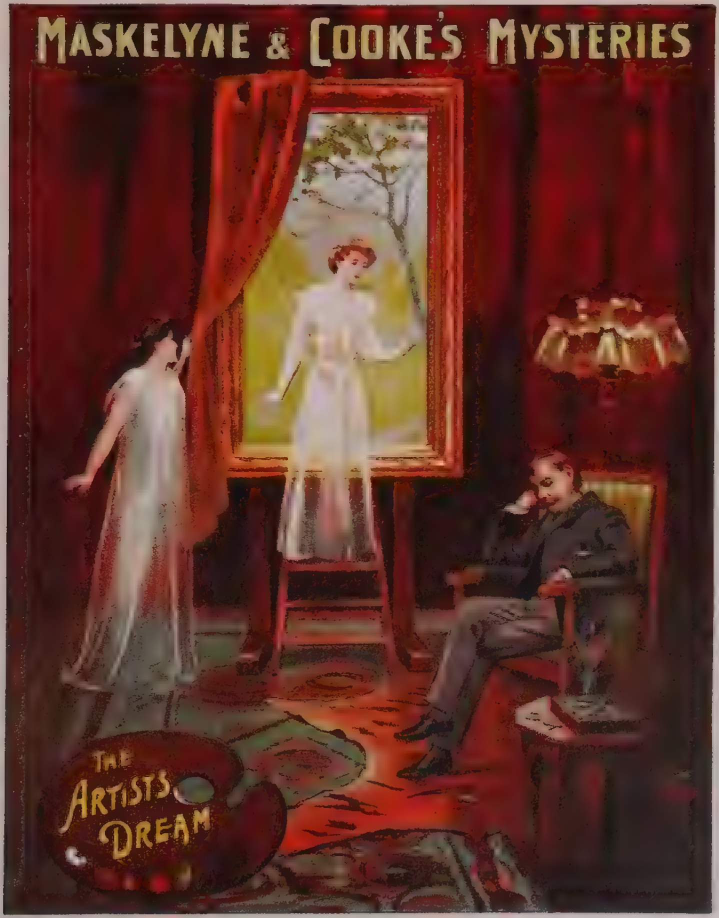
CE'S ENTERTAINMENT


EGYPTIAN HALL
MR NEVIL MASKELYNE'S SENSATIONAL MAGICAL ROMA
THE PHILOSOPHER'S STON
DAILY
AT 3
THE DANGER


MASKELYNE & COOKE'S
MYSTERIES
DAVID DEVANT
AND HIS
MYSTIC KETTLE

ABOVE: 1905 This was the year that Maskelyne's longtime associate George Cooke died, and he took as his new partner a dashing young magician named David Devant. Devant is seen here pouring a drink called for by the audience from his Mystic Kettle.

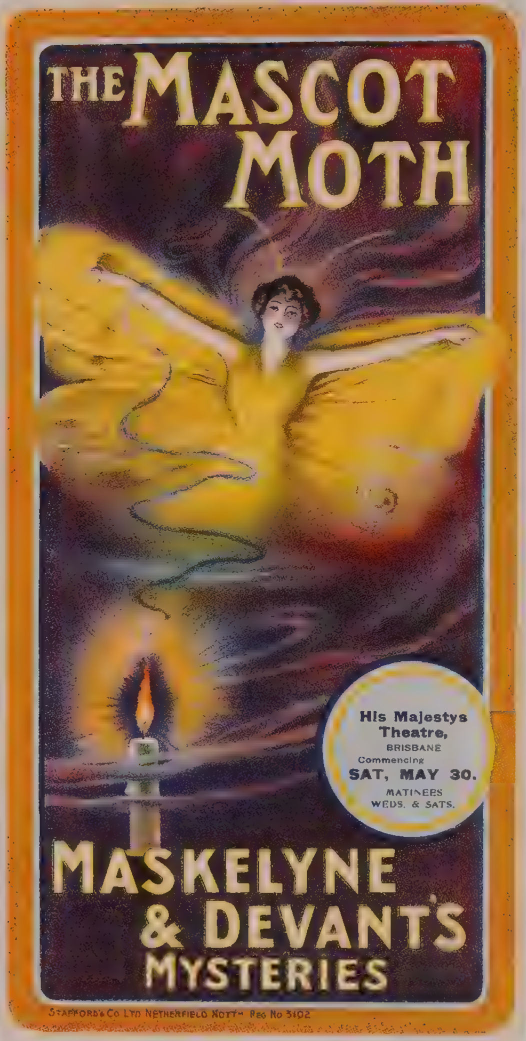

MASKELYNE & COOKE'S
MYSTERIES
MANAGING PARTNER MR. DAVID DEVANT
MR. MASKELYNE'S SENSATIONAL MAGICAL ROMANCE
WILL, THE WITCH & THE WATCHMAN
PERFORMED AT THE EGYPTIAN HALL LONDON UPWARDS OF 10000 TIMES
INTRODUCING THE FAMOUS BOX & CABINET MYSTERIES

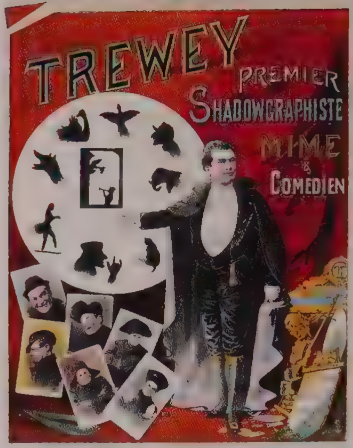

MASKELYNE & COOKE'S MYSTERIES
THE ARTIST'S DREAM

ABOVE RIGHT: 1905 John Nevil Maskelyne embarked on a tour of the provincial music halls with a show that included his (newly named) famous play *Will, the Witch, and the Watchman*, which had already been performed at Egyptian Hall "upwards of 10,000 times." This poster still features Cooke's name but describes David Devant as managing partner.

LEFT: ca. 1905 One of David Devant's most popular magical sketches was the Artist's Dream. It involved an artist who, tired from painting a full-length portrait of a woman, fell asleep and dreamed that the woman stepped off the canvas—and indeed she did.

OPPOSITE: 1902 *The Philosopher's Stone* was a magical play written by John Nevil Maskelyne's eldest son, Nevil. The 40-minute play, which featured any number of magical transpositions and yet another levitation, was performed hundreds of times during its one-year run.

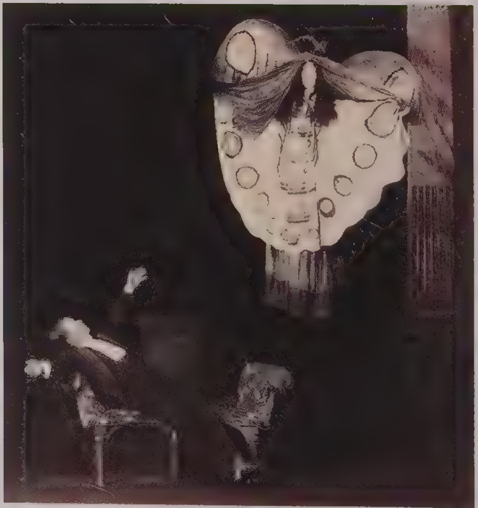

THE MASCOT MOTH
His Majestys Theatre,
BRISBANE
Commencing
SAT, MAY 30.
MATINEES
WEDS. & SATS.
MASKELYNE & DEVANT'S MYSTERIES
STAFFORD'S CO LTD NETHERFIELD NOTTM REG NO 3102


TREWEY
PREMIER
SHADOWGRAPHISTE
MIME
&
COMEDIEN

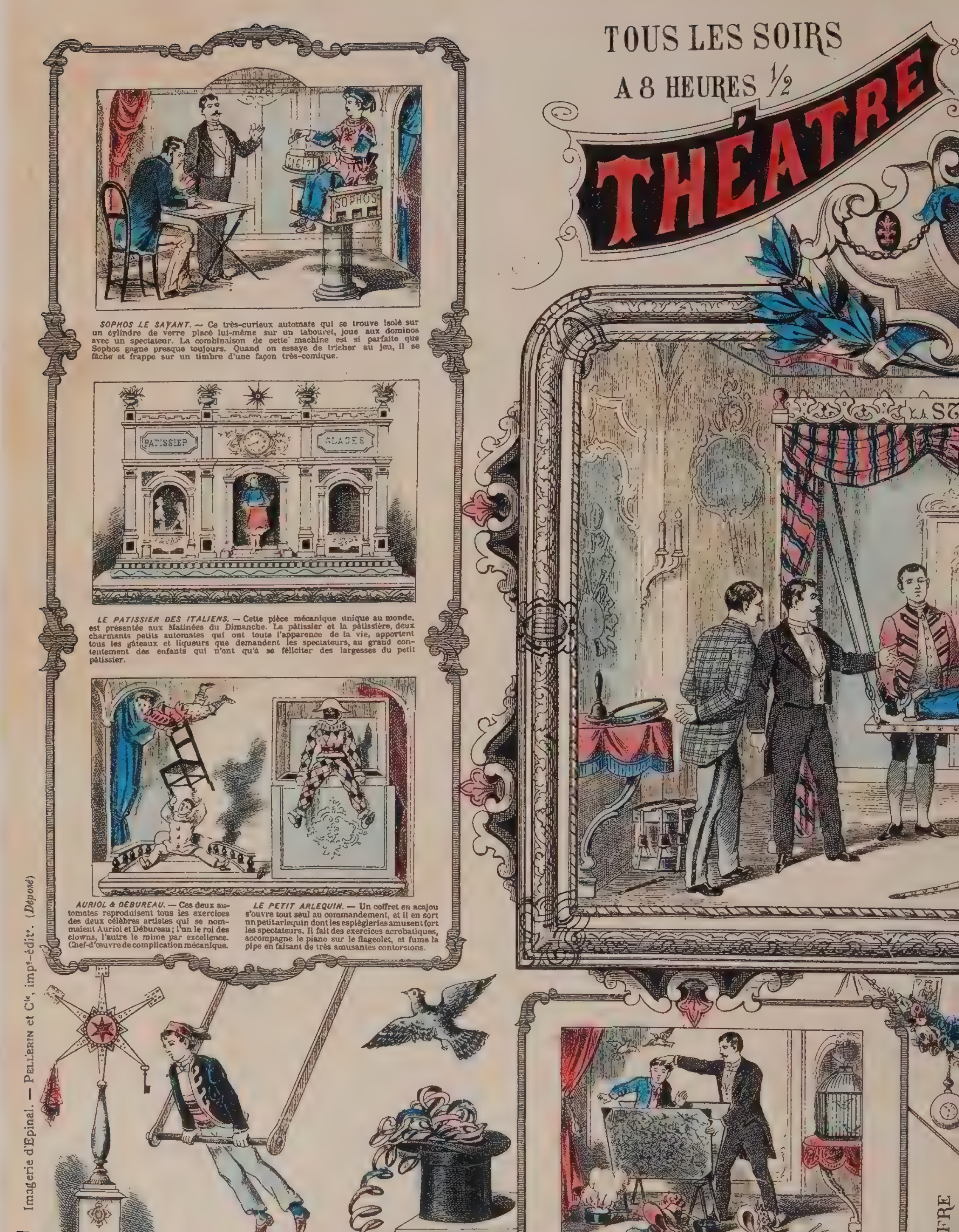
ABOVE AND OPPOSITE: **ca. 1890 and 1889** Félicien Trewey, the great French entertainer, was most famous for his ability to create shadow stories by manipulating his fingers and a few small props in front of a bright light, thereby casting realistic images on a screen, as in the above poster. These animated shadows were among the precursors of cinema, which prompted Louis Lumière to choose Trewey as the man to introduce his Cinématographe, which projected the first films ever, to the London public. Trewey, Maskelyne, and Devant were also among the first to have their acts recorded on film.

ABOVE AND RIGHT: **1908 and 1905** Maskelyne and Devant's first show together at St. George's Hall included Devant's *Mascot Moth*, above, featuring an astonishing illusion by the same name. As captured in the publicity photo, right, Devant's assistant, dressed as a moth, was attracted closer and closer to a candle flame, then suddenly vanished from the middle of the stage.

PAGES 176–177: **1889** This beautiful advertisement was created shortly after future film innovator Georges Méliès took over the Theatre Robert-Houdin. Pictured around the outside border are many of Robert-Houdin's most famous creations, but featured in the center is the spectacular Stroubaika illusion, wherein a man locked to a suspended board would vanish, only to reappear at the back of the theater.



With Magical Friendship
to Ed. Worthington
TREWEY



SOPHOS LE SAVANT. — Ce très-curieux automate qui se trouve isolé sur un cylindre de verre placé lui-même sur un tabouret, joue aux dominos avec un spectateur. La combinaison de cette machine est si parfaite que Sophos gagne presque toujours. Quand on essaye de tricher au jeu, il se fâche et frappe sur un timbre d'une façon très-comique.

LE PATISSIER DES ITALIENS. — Cette pièce mécanique unique au monde, est présentée aux Matinées du Dimanche. Le pâtissier et la pâtissière, deux charmants petits automates qui ont toute l'apparence de la vie, apportent tous les gâteaux et liqueurs que demandent les spectateurs, au grand contentement des enfants qui n'ont qu'à se féliciter des largesses du petit pâtissier.

AURIOL & DÉBUREAU. — Ces deux automates reproduisent tous les exercices des deux célèbres artistes qui se nommaient Auriol et Débureau; l'un le roi des clowns, l'autre le mime par excellence. Chef-d'œuvre de complication mécanique.

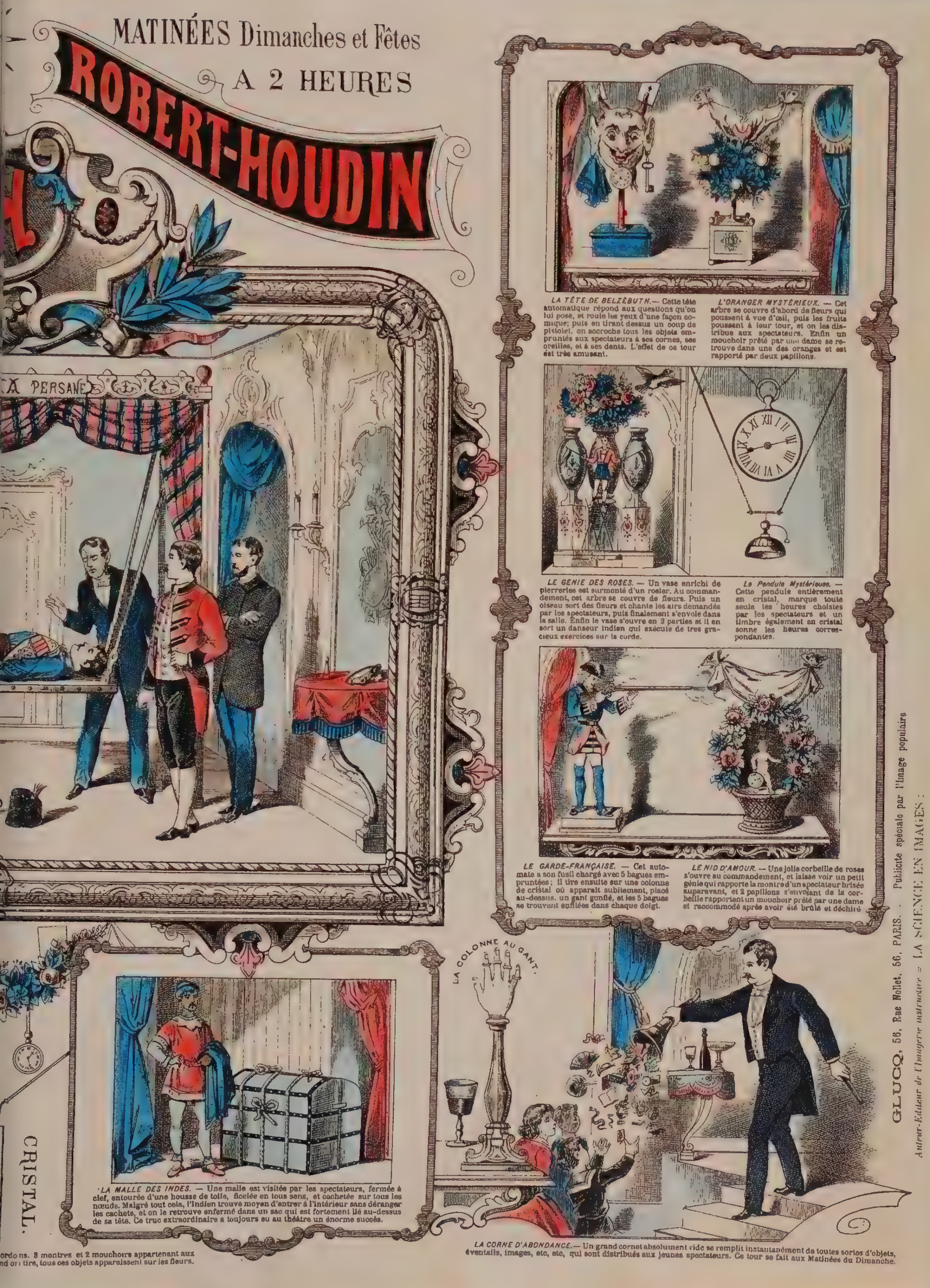
LE PETIT ARLEQUIN. — Un coffret en acajou s'ouvre tout seul au commandement, et il en sort un petit arlequin dont les espiègleries amusent fort les spectateurs. Il fait des exercices acrobatiques, accompagne le piano sur le flageolet, et fume la pipe en faisant de très amusantes contorsions.

ANTONIO DIAVOLO. — Ce merveilleux automate exécute sur son trapèze les exercices les plus difficiles que l'on voit faire aux gymnastes; il se balance tout seul, se pend par les mains ou par les pieds et finalement abandonne tout seul son trapèze. Cette pièce est certainement la plus étonnante de toutes celles qu'a créées Robert-Houdin, au point de vue de la mécanique.

LE CARTON FANTASTIQUE. — Un carton à dessin absolument vide est posé sur deux tréteaux; au commandement il en sort: des casseroles, l'une pleine de feu, l'autre pleine d'eau, la troisième pleine de haricots. Puis une cage d'oiseaux, des tourterelles, des chapeaux, etc, etc, et finalement un enfant; ce qui semble résoudre le problème du contenu plus grand que le contenant!

LA GUIRLANDE. — Une guirlande de fleurs
spectateurs, plus 3 cartes choisies par eux sont

Imagerie d'Epinal. — Pellerin et Cie, impr-édit. (Déposé)



MATINÉES Dimanches et Fêtes

A 2 HEURES

ROBERT-HOUDIN

LA TÊTE DE BELZÉBUTH. — Cette tête automatique répond aux questions qu'on lui pose, et roule les yeux d'une façon comique; puis en tirant dessus un coup de pistolet, on accroche tous les objets empruntés aux spectateurs à ses cornes, ses oreilles, et à ses dents. L'effet de ce tour est très amusant.

L'ORANGER MYSTÉRIEUX. — Cet arbre se couvre d'abord de fleurs qui poussent à vue d'œil, puis les fruits poussent à leur tour, et on les distribue aux spectateurs. Enfin un mouchoir prêté par une dame se retrouve dans une des oranges et est rapporté par deux papillons.

LE GENIE DES ROSES. — Un vase enrichi de pierreries est surmonté d'un rosier. Au commandement, cet arbre se couvre de fleurs. Puis un oiseau sort des fleurs et chante les airs demandés par les spectateurs, puis finalement s'envole dans la salle. Enfin le vase s'ouvre en 3 parties et il en sort un danseur indien qui exécute de tres gracieux exercices sur la corde.

La Pendule Mystérieuse. — Cette pendule entièrement en cristal, marque toute seule les heures choisies par les spectateurs et un timbre également en cristal sonne les heures correspondantes.

LE GARDE-FRANÇAISE. — Cet automate a son fusil chargé avec 5 bagues empruntées; il tire ensuite sur une colonne de cristal où apparait subitement, placé au-dessus, un gant gonflé, et les 5 bagues se trouvent enfilées dans chaque doigt.

LE NID D'AMOUR. — Une jolie corbeille de roses s'ouvre au commandement, et laisse voir un petit génie qui rapporte la montre d'un spectateur brisée auparavant, et 2 papillons s'envolant de la corbeille rapportent un mouchoir prêté par une dame et raccommodé après avoir été brûlé et déchiré

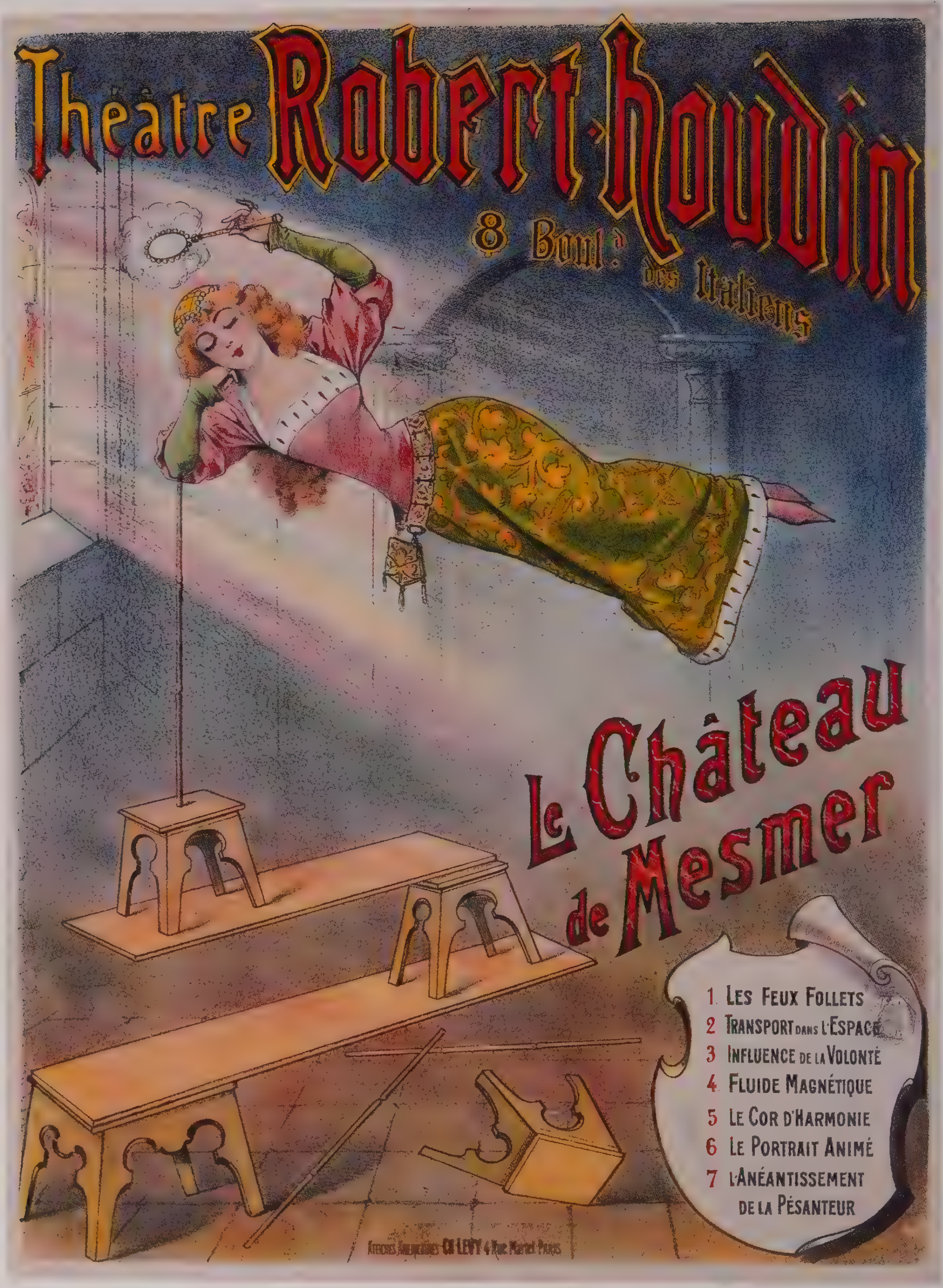
LA MALLE DES INDES. — Une malle est visitée par les spectateurs, fermée à clef, entourée d'une housse de toile, ficelée en tous sens, et cachetée sur tous les nœuds. Malgré tout cela, l'Indien trouve moyen d'entrer à l'intérieur sans déranger les cachets, et on le retrouve enfermé dans un sac qui est fortement lié au-dessus de sa tête. Ce truc extraordinaire a toujours eu au théâtre un énorme succès.

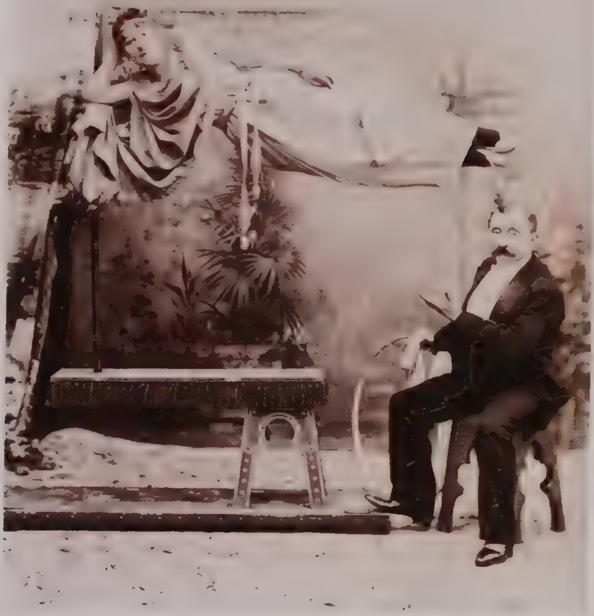
ordons. 8 montres et 2 mouchoirs appartenant aux
nd on tire, tous ces objets apparaissent sur les fleurs.

LA CORNE D'ABONDANCE. — Un grand cornet absolument vide se remplit instantanément de toutes sortes d'objets, éventails, images, etc, etc, qui sont distribués aux jeunes spectateurs. Ce tour se fait aux Matinées du Dimanche.

GLUCQ, 56, Rue Nollet, 56, PARIS. - Publicité spéciale par l'image populaire

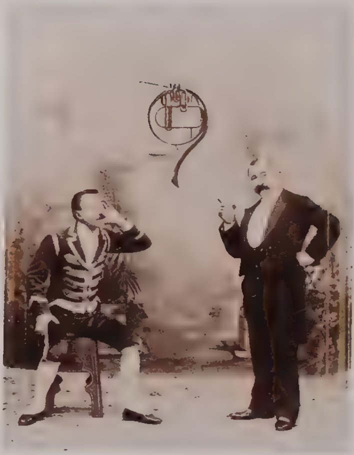
Auteur-Éditeur de l'Imagerie instructive = LA SCIENCE EN IMAGES :

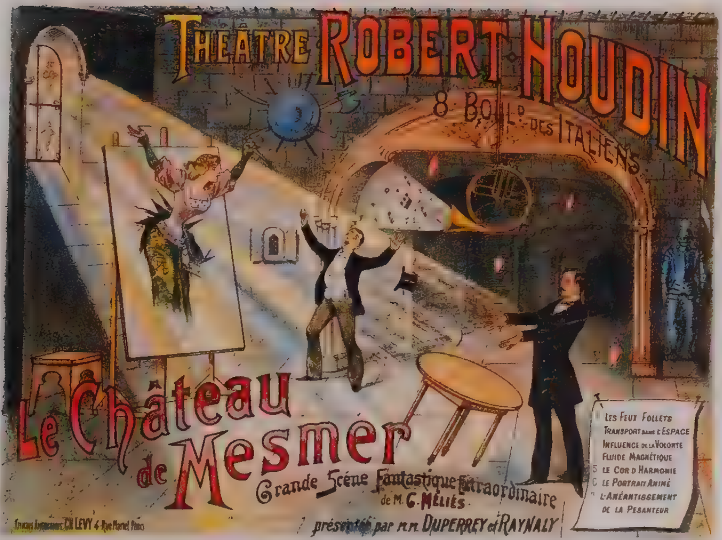

Théâtre Robert-Houdin
8 Boul.d des Italiens
Le Château de Mesmer
1 Les Feux Follets
2 Transport dans l'Espace
3 Influence de la Volonté
4 Fluide Magnétique
5 Le Cor d'Harmonie
6 Le Portrait Animé
7 L'Anéantissement de la Pésanteur
Ateliers Lithographiques Ch LEVY 4 Rue Martel Paris



LEFT: ca. 1894 The reality of the *Mesmer's Castle* poster, opposite, is seen here with Duperrey, a regular performer at the Theatre Robert-Houdin, levitating the wife of the theater's current owner, Georges Méliès. As advertised, not only is the woman defying gravity, but so is the left end of the platform.

OPPOSITE: 1894 Robert-Houdin's original suspension illusion seemingly relied on the effects of the newly discovered anesthetic ether to allow his assistant to sleep in midair. Fifty years later, the theme of this trick had changed to the more topical hypnotism, or mesmerism, named after the famous German physician Franz Mesmer.

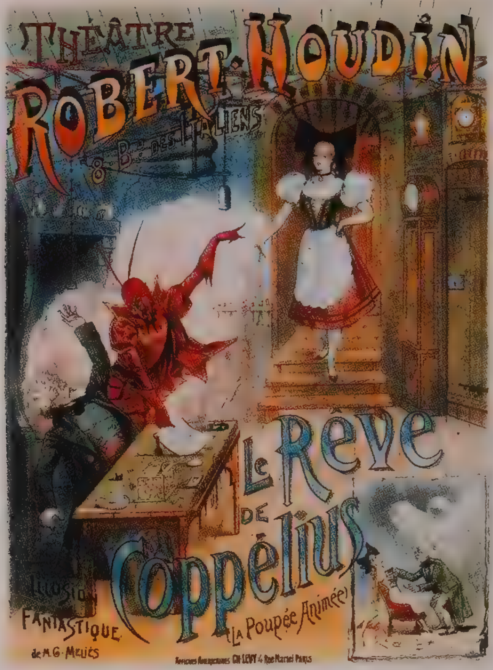


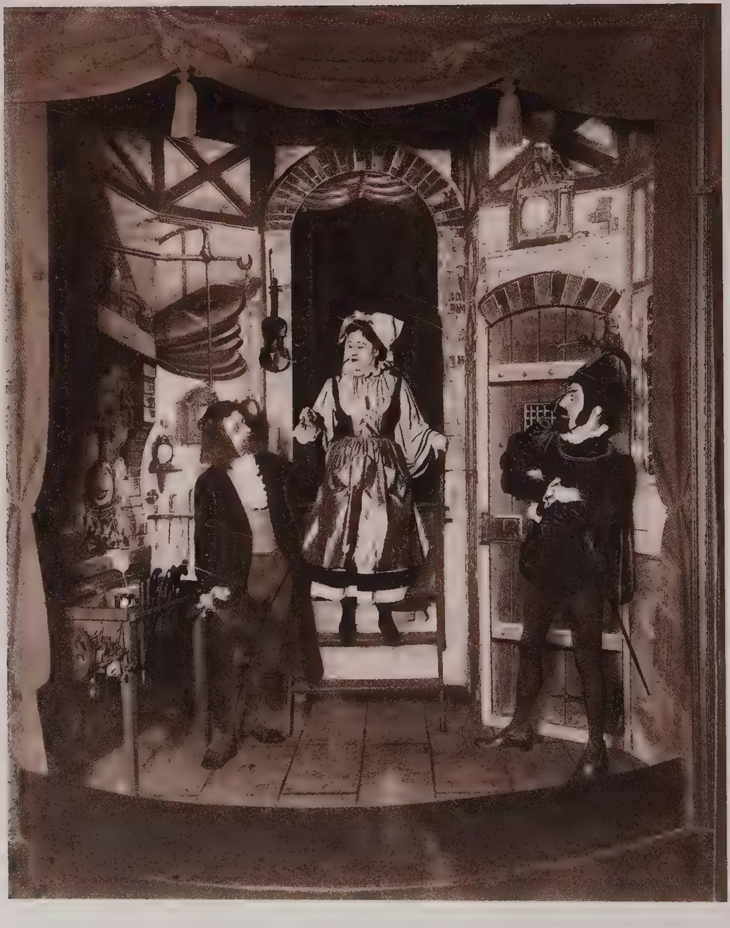

THEATRE ROBERT HOUDIN
8 BOULᴰ DES ITALIENS
Le Château de Mesmer
Grande Scène Fantastique Extraordinaire
de M. G. MÉLIÈS
présentée par MM. DUPERREY et RAYNALY
LES FEUX FOLLETS
TRANSPORT DANS L'ESPACE
INFLUENCE DE LA VOLONTÉ
FLUIDE MAGNÉTIQUE
LE COR D'HARMONIE
LE PORTRAIT ANIMÉ
L'ANÉANTISSEMENT DE LA PESANTEUR
CH. LEVY 4 Rue Martel Paris

LEFT AND ABOVE: 1894 and 1888 The illusionary sketch *Mesmer's Castle* by Georges Méliès, who pioneered special effects in film, featured the talents of two fine magicians, Édouard Raynaly (seated, above) and Duperrey. In this rare photograph, they are seen listening to music generated by spirits on a floating French horn.

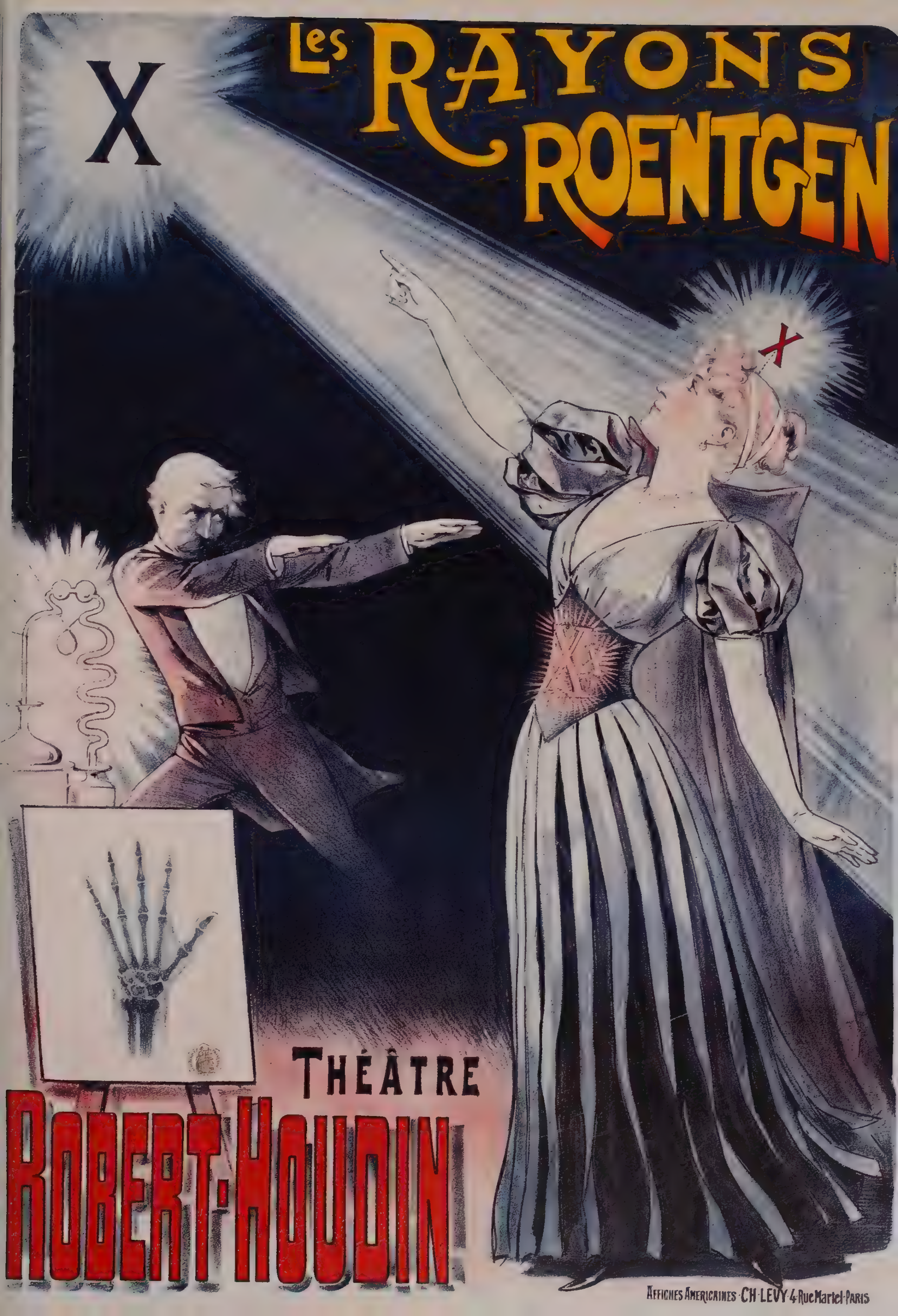
OPPOSITE: **ca. 1895** At the time of this Méliès illusion, which simulated the astonishing effects of X-rays, the public would have recognized the name Roentgen (Wilhelm Roentgen), the German scientist who assigned the name *X-ray* to electromagnetic radiation waves. The inset X-ray image of a hand would have been enormously intriguing to audiences in 1895.

RIGHT: **1895** Another magical sketch by Méliès was *The Dream of Coppelius the Animated Doll.* Méliès was fortunate to be working in Paris during a time when chromolithographs were being produced at the highest artistic levels. This poster is a fine example of lithographic art.

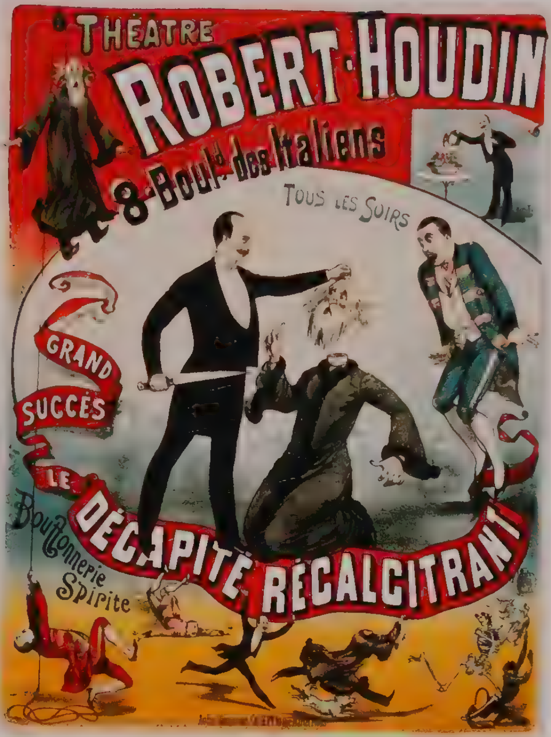

THÉÂTRE
ROBERT-HOUDIN
8 Bd des Italiens
Le Rêve de Coppélius
(La Poupée Animée)
Illusion Fantastique
de M. G. Méliès



LEFT: **1895** *The Dream of Coppelius* was based on an 1816 short story by E. T. A. Hoffmann wherein a student falls in love with and ultimately is driven mad by a female automaton created by Coppelius. This scene shows Jehanne d'Alcy, center, who played the robot, and Jules-Eugène Legris, right, who worked as Méliès's featured magician for 20 years, as Mephisto.


X
Les RAYONS ROENTGEN
THÉÂTRE
ROBERT-HOUDIN
AFFICHES AMERICAINES · CH·LEVY · 4 Rue Martel · PARIS

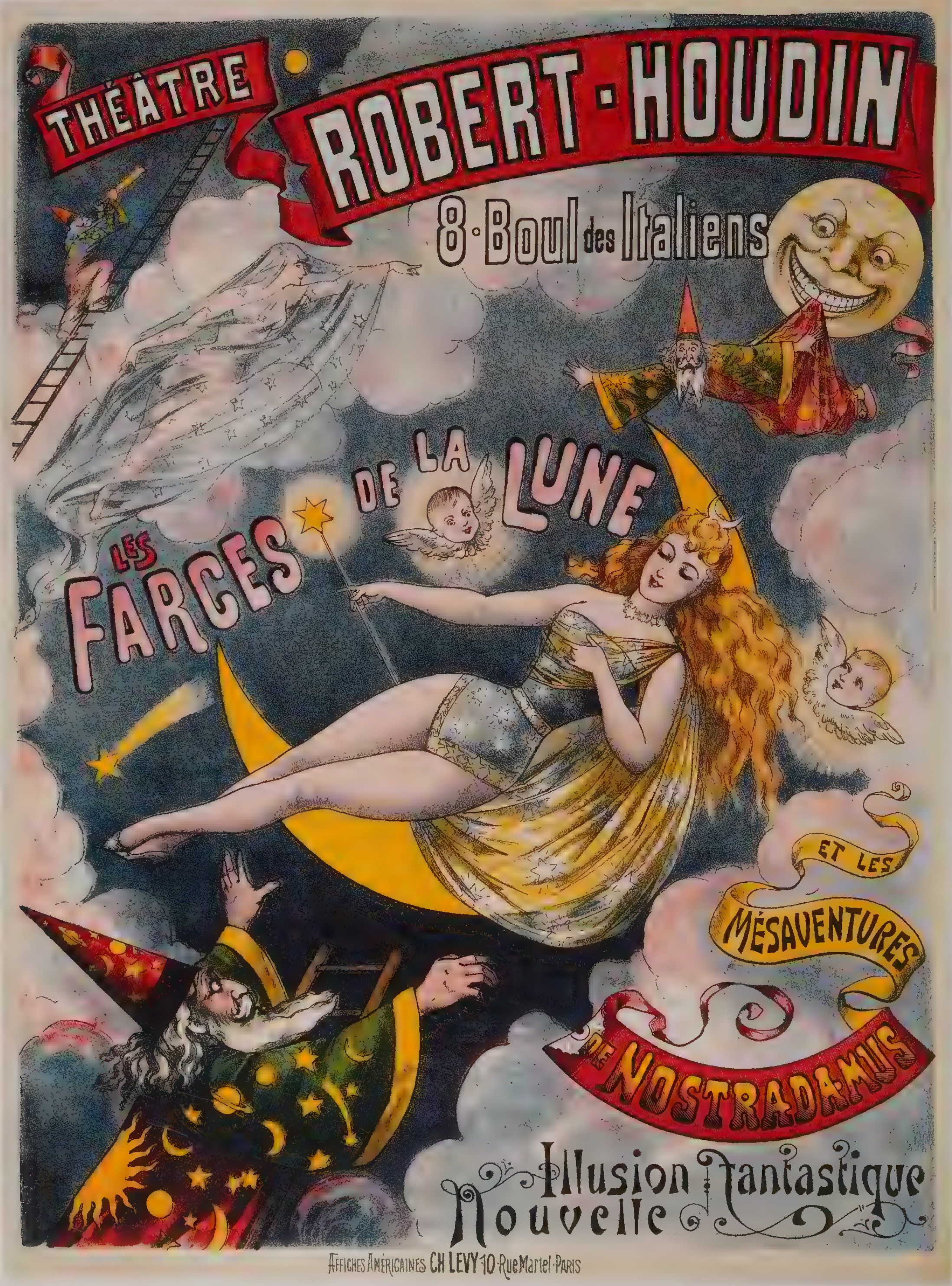
ABOVE: **ca. 1890–1899** To publicize Georges Méliès's magical sketch *The Recalcitrant Beheaded*, this portrait of Harmington was taken in Disdéri's photography studio above the Theatre Robert-Houdin. It unmistakably demonstrates how, with a twinkle in one's eye, something as grisly as a beheading can become comically entertaining.



ABOVE RIGHT: **ca. 1889–1892** Not only did Méliès make *The Recalcitrant Beheaded*, with its skeletons and headless characters, suitable for the entire family, the sketch ran for a record-breaking 1,200 performances. This long, profitable run was due in part to advertising such as this striking poster.

LEFT: **ca. 1890** These are two rare photos of *The Recalcitrant Beheaded* taken on the stage of the Theatre Robert-Houdin. In the lower photo, Harmington, left, can be seen wielding his sword. These images show Georges Méliès, right, in a rare appearance onstage.

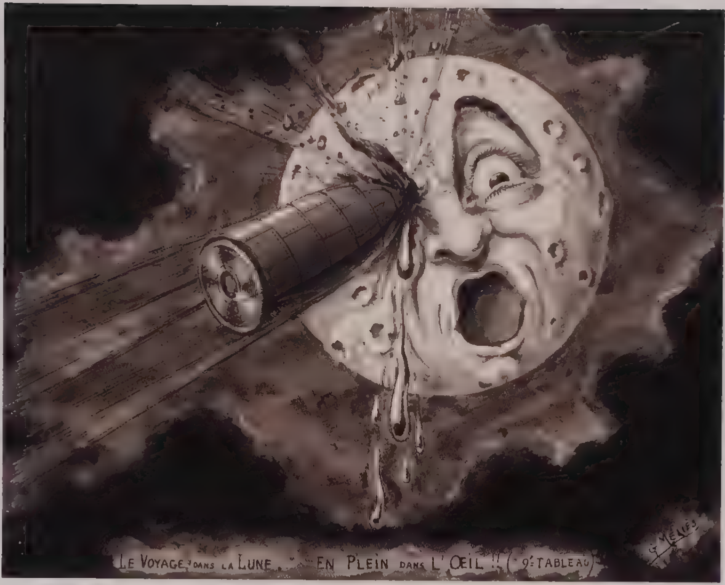
OPPOSITE: **ca. 1889–1892** Harmington (Charles Fauque), right, appeared as a headlining performer at the Theatre Robert-Houdin for five years. Here he appears with Marius (Jules David) in a scene from Méliès's *The Recalcitrant Beheaded*. The comic abilities of Harmington and Marius made this otherwise gruesome performance suitable for children.

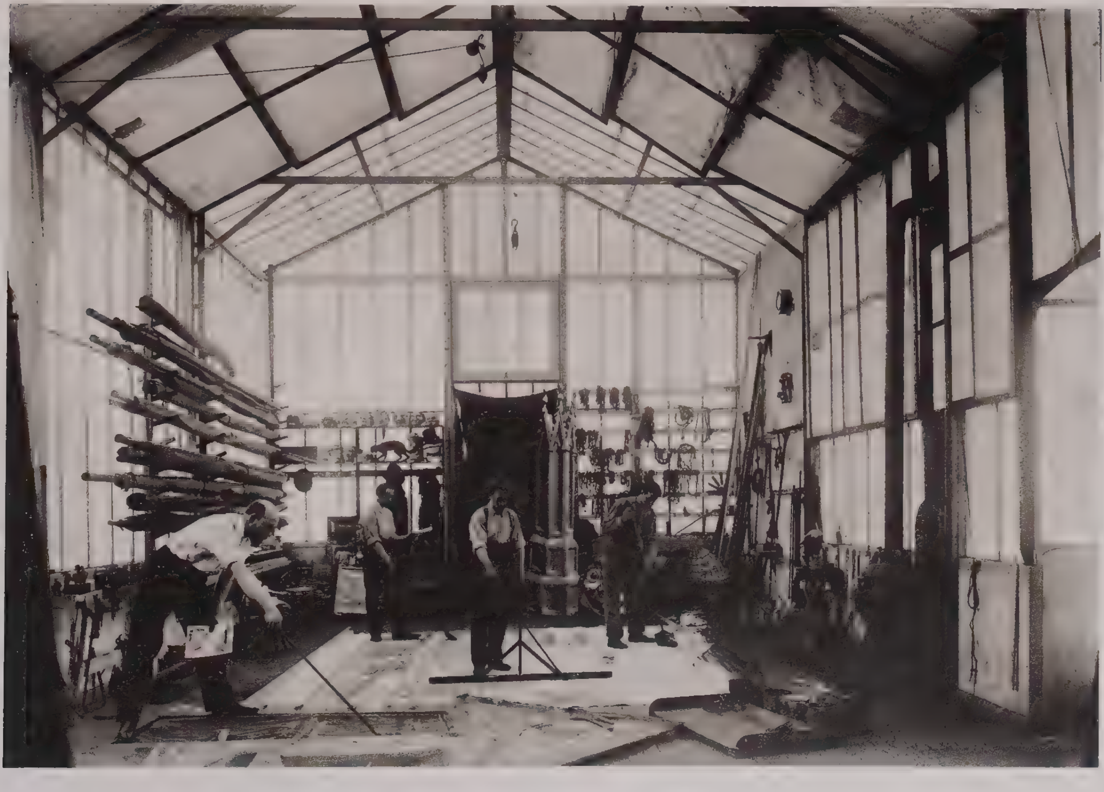

THÉÂTRE
ROBERT-HOUDIN
8 Boul des Italiens
LES FARCES DE LA LUNE
ET LES
MÉSAVENTURES
DE NOSTRADAMUS
Illusion Fantastique Nouvelle
AFFICHES AMÉRICAINES CH LEVY 10 Rue Martel PARIS

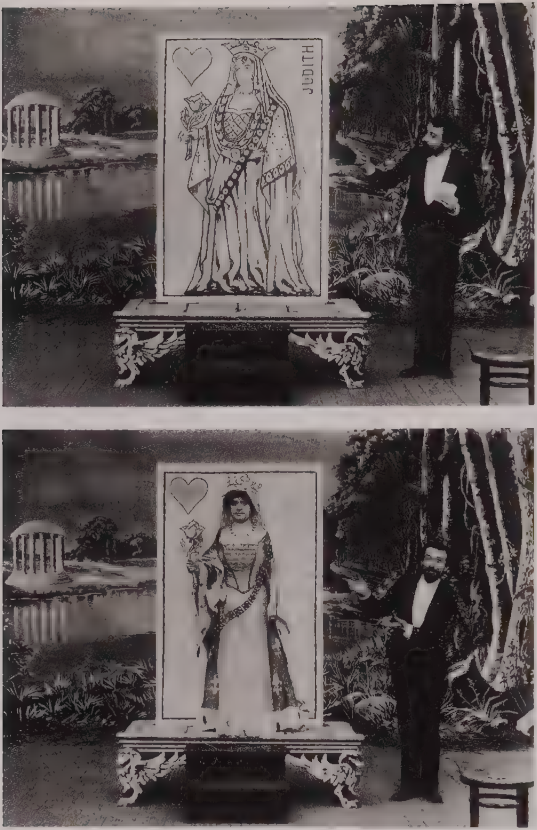
ABOVE: **1891** Another fantastic poster advertises Méliès's magical playlet *Farces of the Moon, or the Misadventures of Nostradamus*, with his wife, Jehanne d'Alcy, playing the role of the goddess Phoebe.

RIGHT: **ca. 1930** The smiling moon seen in the upper right corner of the *Farces of the Moon* poster, opposite, was turned into an iconic image from Méliès's most famous film, from 1902, *A Trip to the Moon*. Méliès made this drawing of a spaceship hitting the Man on the Moon 28 years after he completed this classic film.

BELOW: **1893 and ca. 1900** Eventually, Georges Méliès turned his attention from creating illusions onstage to producing films of magical effects. His first film studio, below, had the same dimensions as the stage at the Theatre Robert-Houdin. The camera remained stationary so that it duplicated the view of an audience member in the theater.


LE VOYAGE DANS LA LUNE ... EN PLEIN DANS L'ŒIL !! (9e TABLEAU)
G. MÉLIÈS



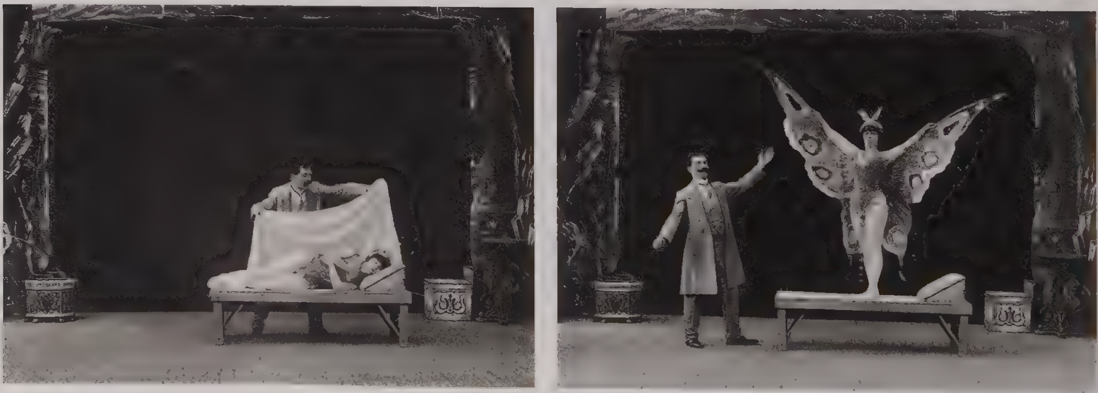


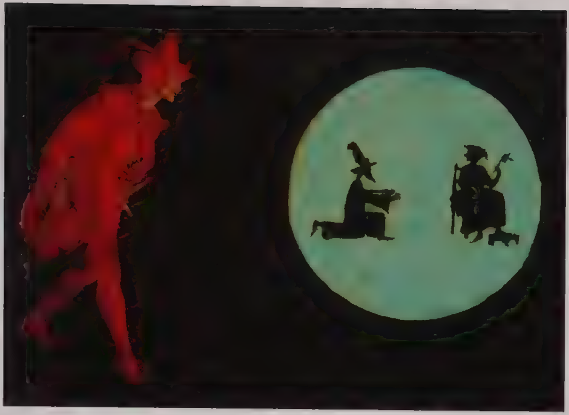
LEFT: **1905** Two photographs of Georges Méliès performing David Devant's classic effect, the Artist's Dream, but instead of using stage effects, he uses camera tricks. A playing card visibly grew into an enormous queen of hearts, and then the queen magically came to life. Filmmakers were finding that their cameras had become as powerful as a magician's wand.

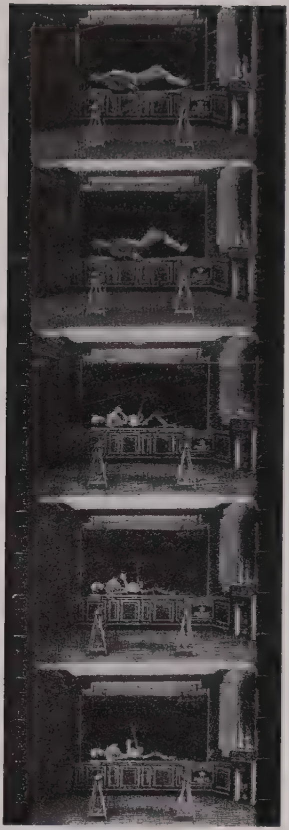
OPPOSITE BOTTOM: **1903** A still from *The Infernal Boiling Pot* shows the Devil throwing humans into a flaming cauldron. The hand-colored frames of film brought a whole new level of realism to Méliès's already fantastic work.

PAGES 188–189: **1901** Georges Méliès created this drawing for his innovative film *The Man with the Rubber Head*. The motion-picture camera offered the filmmaker/magician an array of new methods, including stop-motion, dissolves, double exposures, fades, and rear projection, to achieve standard magical effects. Ironically, this versatile new tool was largely responsible for the demise of Méliès's historic magic theater.

RIGHT AND BELOW: **1901** Méliès was filming what he knew best—a magician performing tricks onstage. Here, in *The Brahmin and the Butterfly*, a woman is wrapped in a cocoon and emerges as a butterfly. Having replaced the conjurer's traditional methods with his new camera tricks, Méliès must have felt like a real magician.

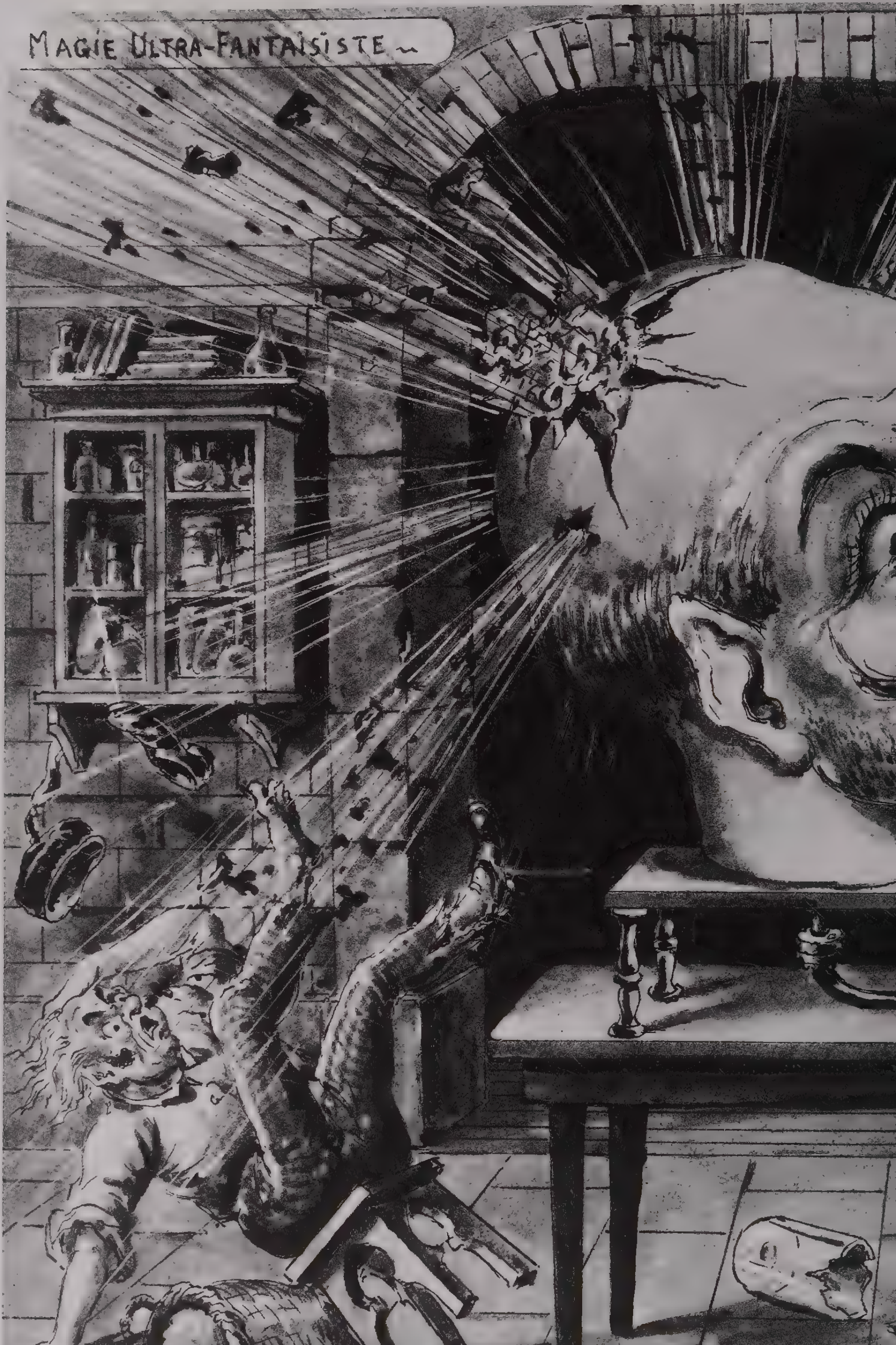


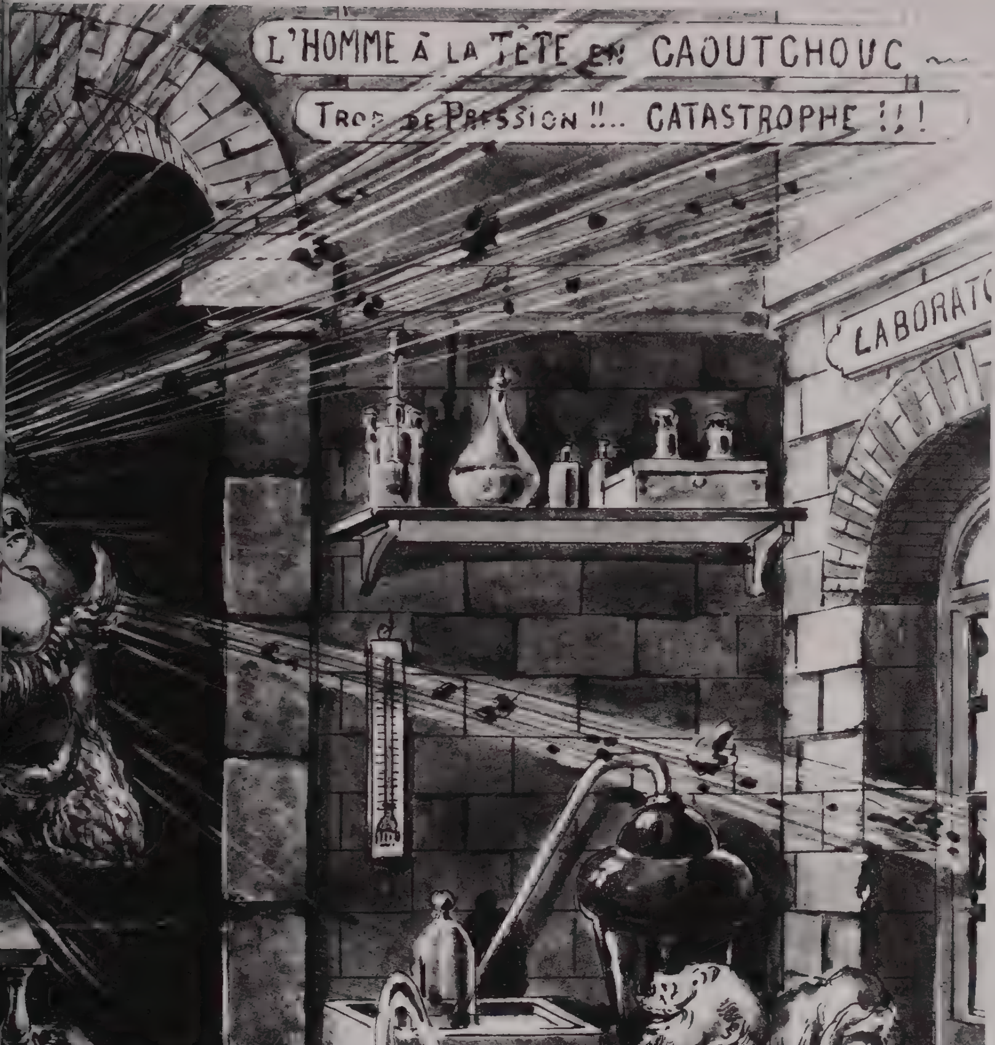




ABOVE: **ca. 1890s** This prophetic painting by Georges Méliès foreshadows the entire range of his astonishing career. The magical character Mephisto, left, watches magic-lantern shadowgraphs of a wizard listening to a musician. The worlds of magic, fantasy, and cinema would be carried to new heights by this creative genius.

RIGHT: **1902** Georges Méliès used a cross-fade in his short film *The Magical Egg* to cause a skeleton to turn into a magician who, after performing a series of startling magical effects, changed back into a skeleton. This simple cinematic technique replaced the complicated magic principles that stage illusionists had used for decades.


MAGIE ULTRA-FANTAISISTE ~

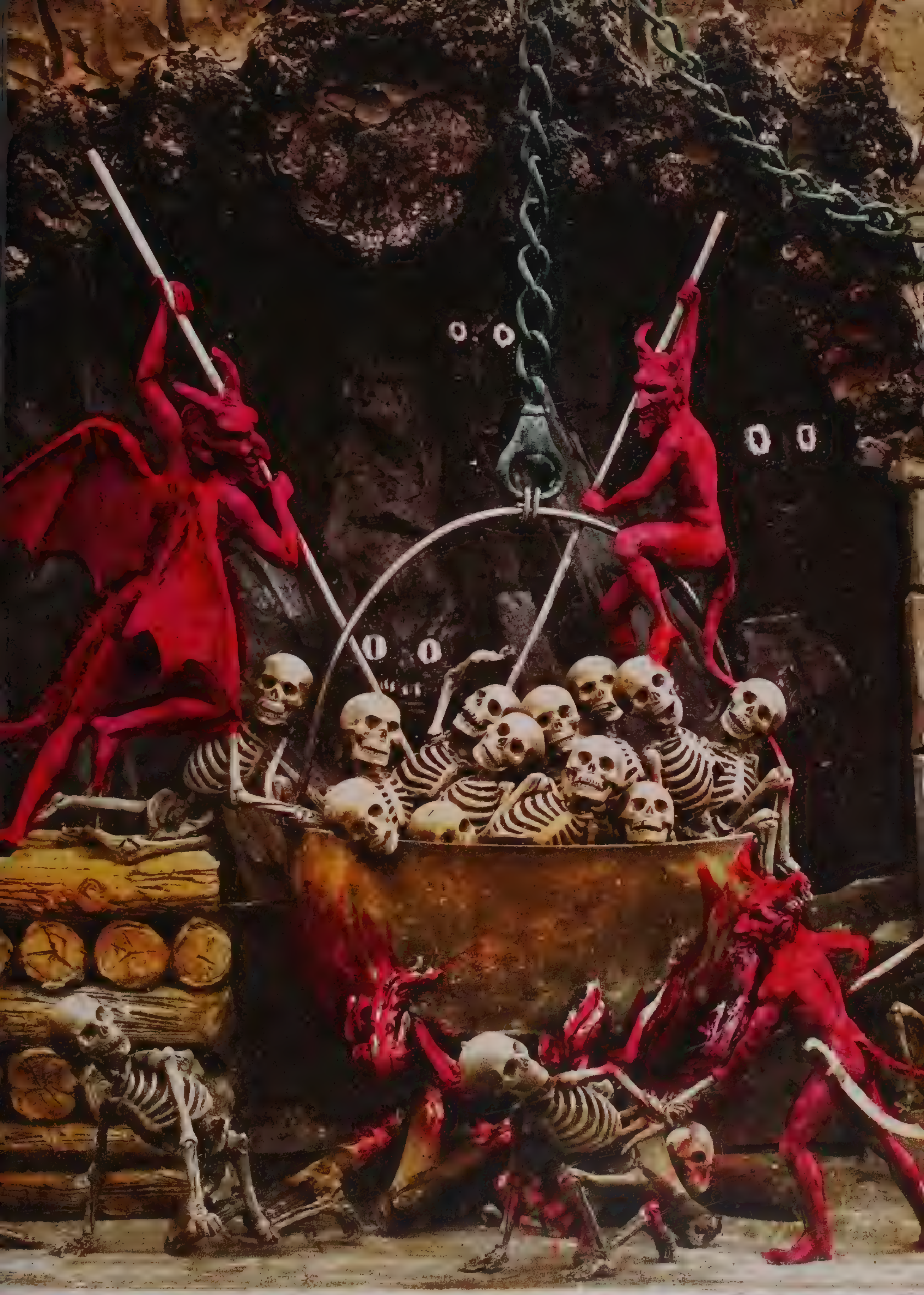

L'HOMME À LA TÊTE EN CAOUTCHOUC ~
TROP DE PRESSION !!.. CATASTROPHE !!!
LABORATO
G. MÉLIÈS.

4 4

THE SUPERNATURAL AND THE SPIRIT WORLDS

Jim Steinmeyer

4 4



LA CHAUDIERE DU DIABLE

4

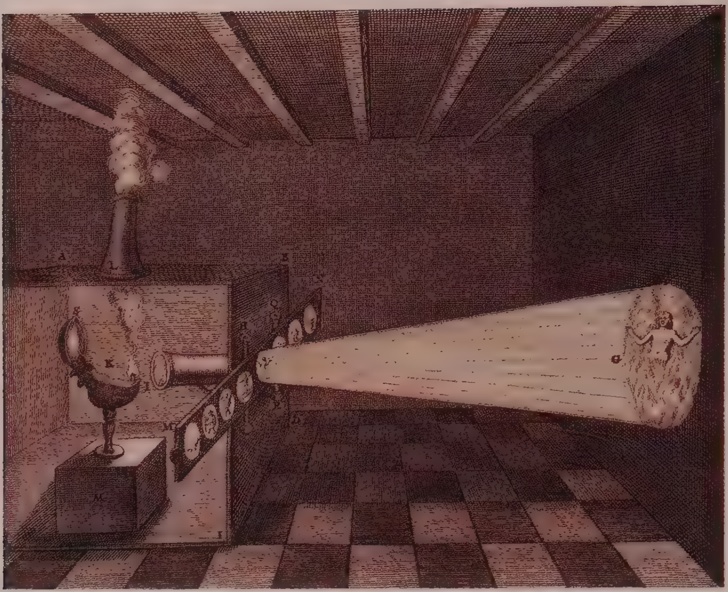
Jim Steinmeyer

THE SUPERNATURAL AND THE SPIRIT WORLDS

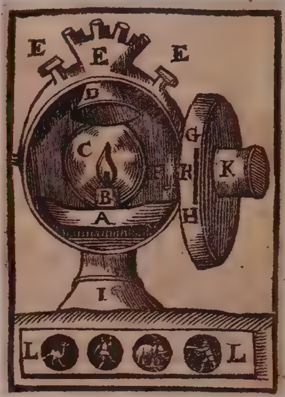
In the first printed English book on conjuring, *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* (1584), author Reginald Scot scolded his readers for believing in ghosts: "But certainly, some one knave in a white sheet hath cozened [tricked] and abused many thousands that way...Well, thanks be to God, this wretched and cowardly infidelity, since the preaching of the gospel, is in part forgotten; and doubtless, the rest of those illusions will in short time (by God's grace) be detected and vanish away." Of course, illusions of ghosts did not vanish away. Magicians have always had an uneasy alliance with the spirits. It may be considered old fashioned or primitive to evoke ghosts—especially for a modern theatrical wizard—but the secrets for producing them have been refined and perfected over the years. And the promise of ghosts has always sold tickets.

PAGE 191: **1869** Nineteenth-century audiences had a fascination with death and morbid images; these often worked their ways into innocent, imaginative forms of entertainment. French sculptors Pierre Adolphe Hennetier and Alfred Habert produced tabletop scenes of the Devil's daily life. These sculptures were photographed and sold as stereoscopic views, or hand tinted to be viewed as peep-show slides.

OPPOSITE: **ca. 1890** In the early days of photography, trick photos were often considered part of the magician's arsenal. Here, Dutch magician E. Chambly used a double-exposed photograph, adding a mysterious angel to visualize his magic. During his show, the disembodied wooden hand, placed on a table, would mysteriously rap out answers to questions.

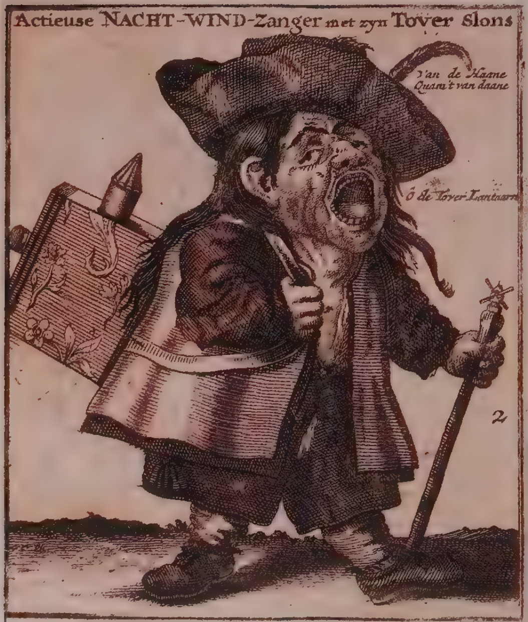


LEFT: **1646** The Jesuit scholar and inventor Athanasius Kircher described lenses combined with a lamp, an early magic lantern, in the book *Ars magna lucis et umbrae* (*The Great Art of Light and Shadow*). As the glass slide was pulled, the pictures would be displayed in succession.



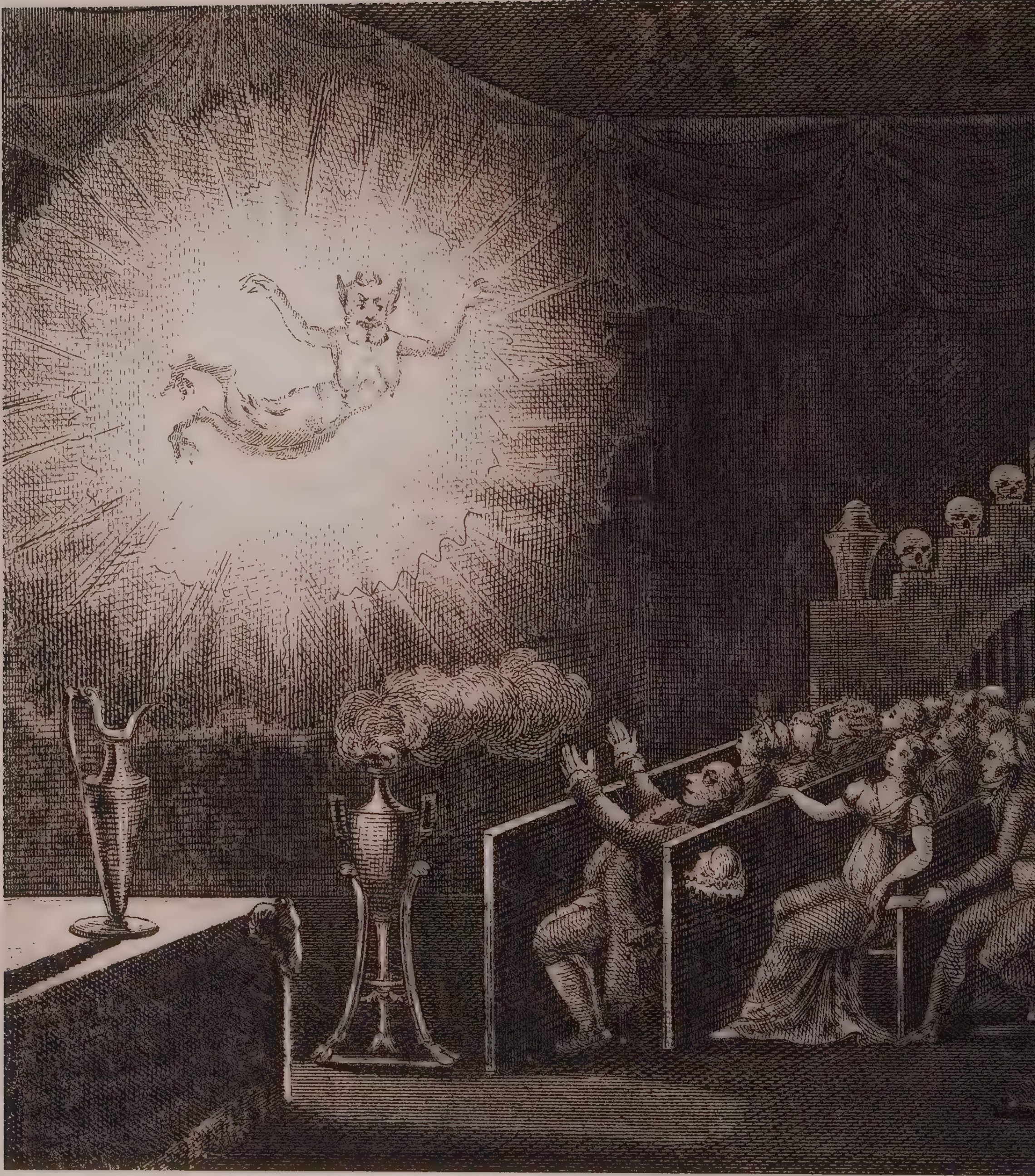
RIGHT AND BELOW: **1725 and ca. late 18th century** This engraving shows an itinerant magic-lantern showman, carrying his tin lanterns on his back. The lanterns had been used for entertainment for more than 100 years before Étienne-Gaspard Robertson's sensational supernatural shows. The illustration of a magic lantern, right, is from the Dutch book *Het natuurlyk toverboek* (*The Book of Natural Magic*) by Simon Witgeest.

OPPOSITE: **ca. 1810** A delicate, French glass magic-lantern slide shows a comically horrific devil, entering the room by lighting his way with a candle. In the darkness, this bright, spindly figure would make a dramatic entrance, emerging from the darkness and then gradually coming into focus to loom over the audience.



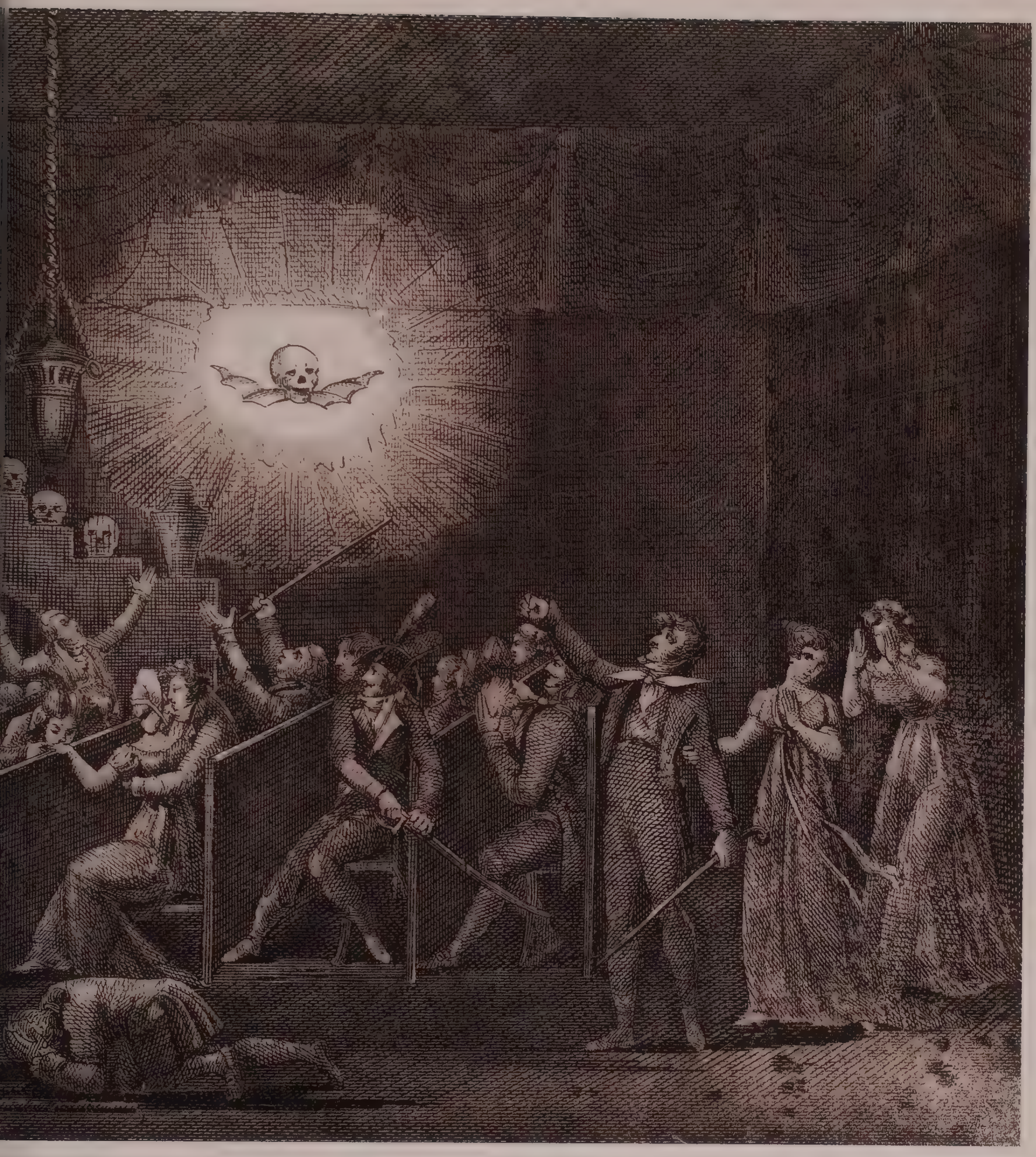
Bringing the Dead to Life

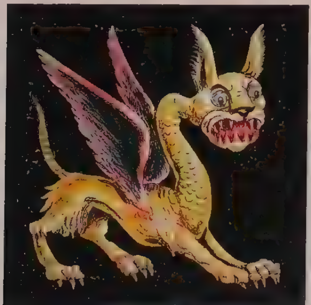
From the fall of 1793 through the summer of 1794, France endured the Reign of Terror, Maximilien Robespierre's bloodiest chapter of the French Revolution. As many as 40,000 citizens suspected of being "enemies of the revolution" had been executed. Late in 1794, with the thud of the falling guillotine blade still a vivid memory for every Parisian, the city's residents were invited to attend one of the most unsettling entertainments in the history of the theater. A group of about 60 spectators gathered in a small room at the Pavilion de l'Echiquier, which had been hung with funereal black curtains and filled with candles. The expectant audience grew quiet as their thin, pale host, Étienne-Gaspard Robertson, stepped forward and slowly, ritually began extinguishing the candles. A journalist for *L'Ami des Lois* recorded Robertson's words: "Citizens, I am not one of those adventurers or impudent swindlers who promise more than they can perform. I have assured the public in the *Journal de Paris* that I can bring the dead to life, and I shall do so. Those of the company who desire to see the apparitions of those who were dear to them, but who have passed away from this life by sickness or otherwise, have only to speak, and I shall obey their command." Then various spectators took turns standing, looking haggard, expectant,

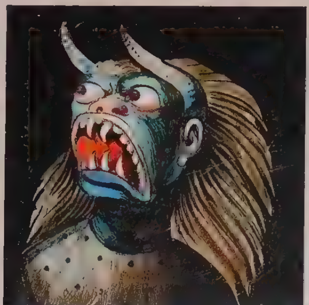


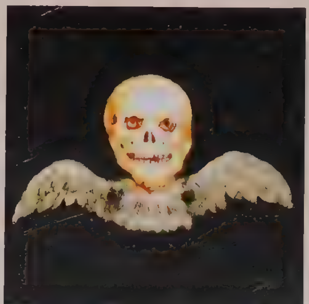
ABOVE: **1831** This engraving captures the fear and wonder of Robertson's Parisian audience during his famous *Phantasmagoria* in 1794. Ghosts and devils seemed to surround the audience, zooming into sight, then fading away. These mysterious projected images soon entered the repertoire of magicians and were a precursor to the early cinema.

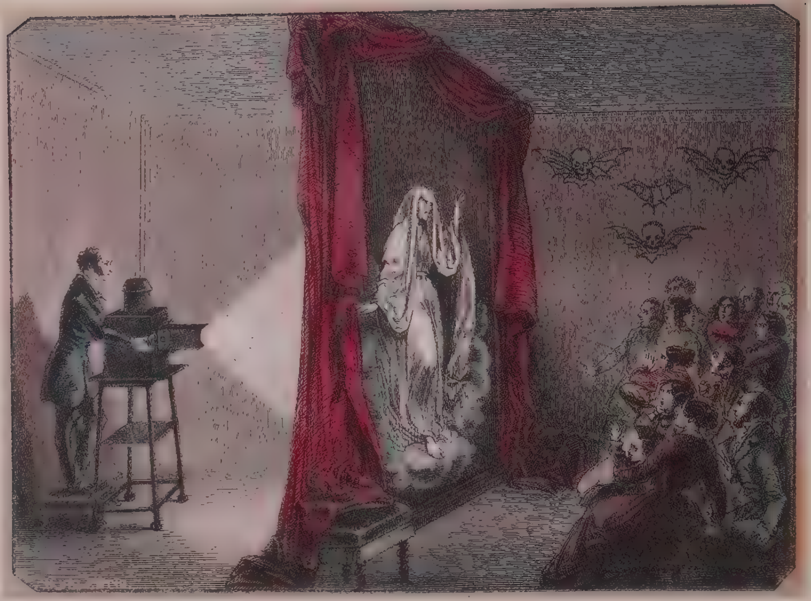
OPPOSITE: **ca. 1830** These three exotic creatures were carefully hand-painted and tinted on glass slides. They were originally used in phantasmagoria shows to produce fearsome images in a darkened room. Notice the winged skull, one of the apparitions pictured in the engraving of Robertson's performance.











ABOVE: **ca. 1860** This depiction of the French magician named Moreau (Théodore-François Sainti) displays the essence of the phantasmagoria performance. Images were projected on a waxed, translucent screen, with the lantern concealed from the audience. By moving the lantern and simultaneously adjusting the focus, the magician changed the size of the ghostly image.

OPPOSITE: **ca. 1915** This stock poster captures a typical image for magic shows after the turn of the 20th century. The beautiful assistant, a medium for the magical séance, is surrounded by horrible, ghostly images that she has summoned. Slate writing and the spirit bell were by this time favorite tricks.

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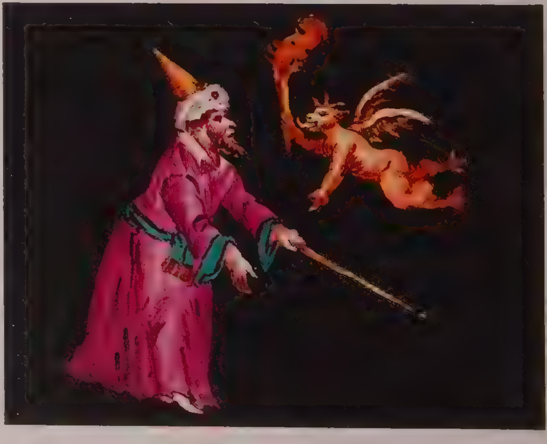
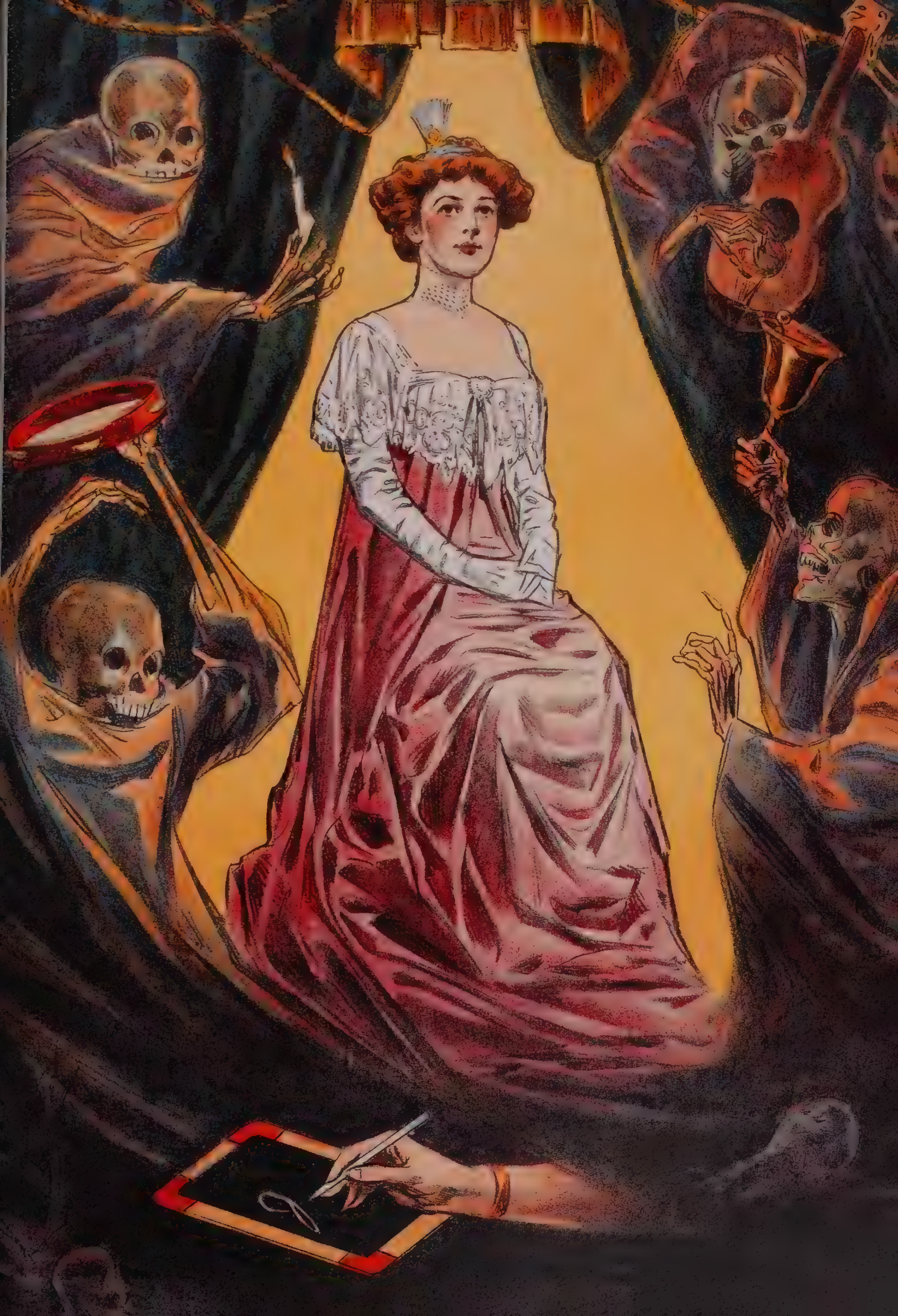
or sorrowful, and called for the spirits of loved ones. Robertson consulted a brazier of coals, adding a mysterious potion or talisman to produce clouds of white smoke. A glow arose from the fire, and slowly images began to form around the room. The ghosts appeared with careful choreography, fading into view, growing enormously, or flickering away again. According to contemporaneous accounts, the audience laughed nervously, murmured their astonished approval, screamed, or rushed from the room (pp. 196–197).

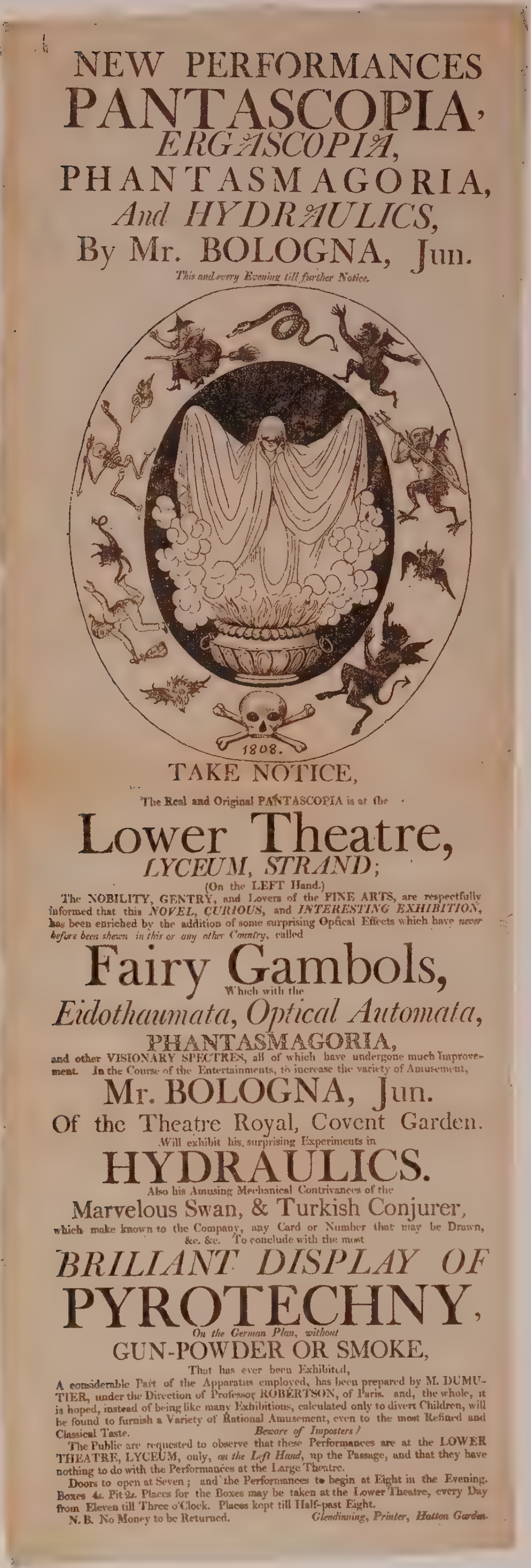
Phantasmagoria: Precursor to Cinema

Despite Robertson's initial promise, his famous *Phantasmagoria*—the revolutionary show born out of the Revolution—was actually a fantastic swindle; neither a séance nor a ceremony but a surreal, theatrical shell game. Born Étienne-Gaspard Robert in Liège, Belgium, in 1763, Robertson was not a trained stage magician but a scientist and an optician. Like many lecturers of his day, he had also mastered the essential elements of showmanship. Today we recognize Robertson's thrilling *Phantasmagoria* as a precursor to the cinema and a daring approach to magic, jolting audiences born of the Age of Enlightenment with humanity's most basic superstitions. His techniques now seem elementary. The magic

BELOW: **ca. 1830** A magic-lantern slide shows a wizard summoning a demon. The tiny paintings called for meticulous detail, as the images were enlarged by the projectors. The background was covered with layers of thick black paint, so only the bright image would be seen in the darkness.







NEW PERFORMANCES
PANTASCOPIA,
ERGASCOPIA,
PHANTASMAGORIA,
And HYDRAULICS,
By Mr. BOLOGNA, Jun.
This and every Evening till further Notice.

1808.

TAKE NOTICE,
The Real and Original PANTASCOPIA is at the
Lower Theatre,
LYCEUM, STRAND;
(On the LEFT Hand.)

The NOBILITY, GENTRY, and Lovers of the FINE ARTS, are respectfully informed that this *NOVEL, CURIOUS,* and *INTERESTING EXHIBITION,* has been enriched by the addition of some surprising Optical Effects which have *never before been shewn in this or any other Country,* called

Fairy Gambols,
Which with the
Eidothaumata, Optical Automata,
PHANTASMAGORIA,

and other VISIONARY SPECTRES, all of which have undergone much Improvement. In the Course of the Entertainments, to increase the variety of Amusement,

Mr. BOLOGNA, Jun.
Of the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden.
Will exhibit his surprising Experiments in
HYDRAULICS.
Also his Amusing Mechanical Contrivances of the
Marvelous Swan, & Turkish Conjurer,

which make known to the Company, any Card or Number that may be Drawn, &c. &c. To conclude with the most

BRILIANT DISPLAY OF
PYROTECHNY,
On the German Plan, without
GUN-POWDER OR SMOKE,
That has ever been Exhibited,

A considerable Part of the Apparatus employed, has been prepared by M. DUMUTIER, under the Direction of Professor ROBERTSON, of Paris. and, the whole, it is hoped, instead of being like many Exhibitions, calculated only to divert Children, will be found to furnish a Variety of Rational Amusement, even to the most Refined and Classical Taste. *Beware of Imposters!*

The Public are requested to observe that these Performances are at the LOWER THEATRE, LYCEUM, only, *on the Left Hand,* up the Passage, and that they have nothing to do with the Performances at the Large Theatre.

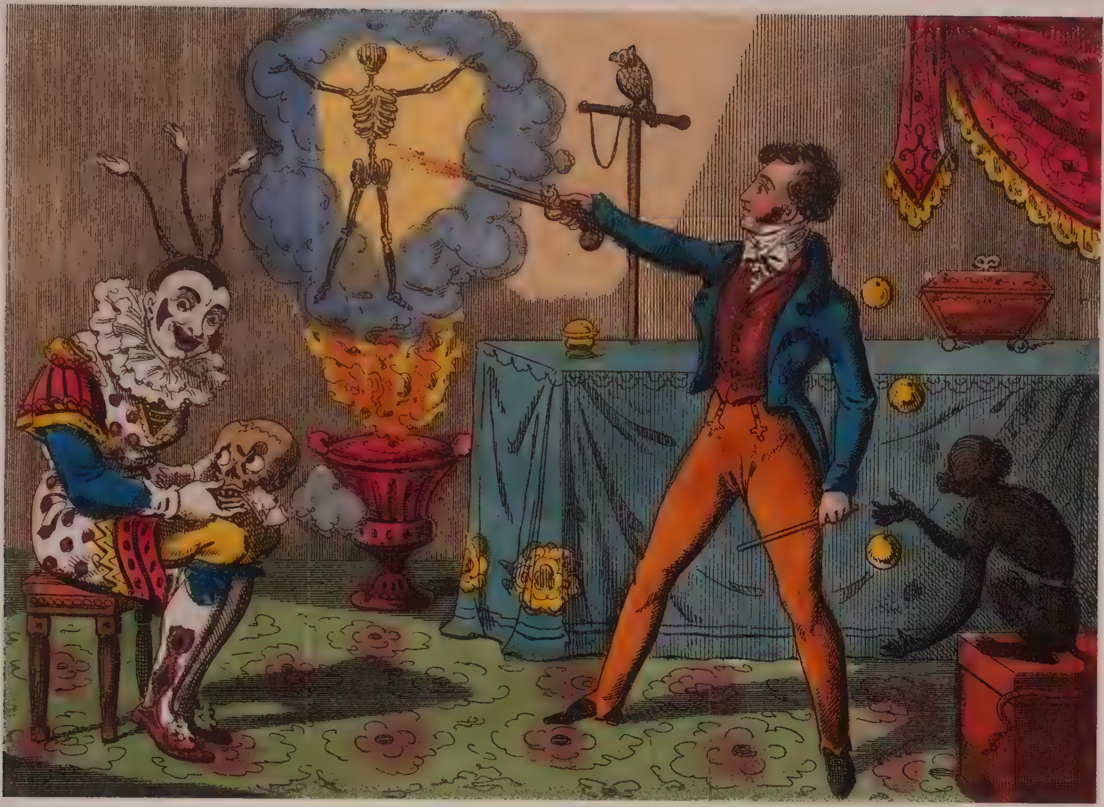
Doors to open at Seven; and the Performances to begin at Eight in the Evening. Boxes 4*s.* Pit 2*s.* Places for the Boxes may be taken at the Lower Theatre, every Day from Eleven till Three o'Clock. Places kept till Half-past Eight.

N.B. No Money to be Returned. *Glendinning, Printer, Hatton Garden.*

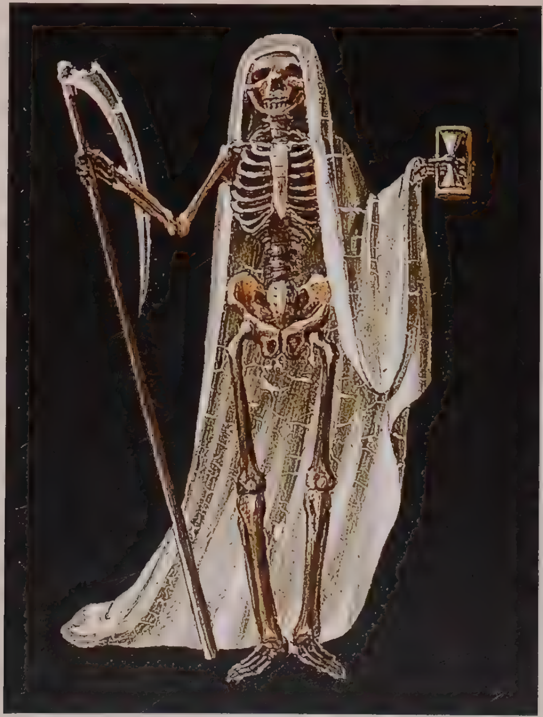
LEFT: **1808** In 1796 Jack Bologna brought the first phantasmagoria show across the channel to London's Lyceum Theatre. He titled his version *Pantascopia*. Twelve years later, during a return engagement, Bologna filled the program with a host of scientific and optical wonders. But the ghostly images were still the stars of the show.

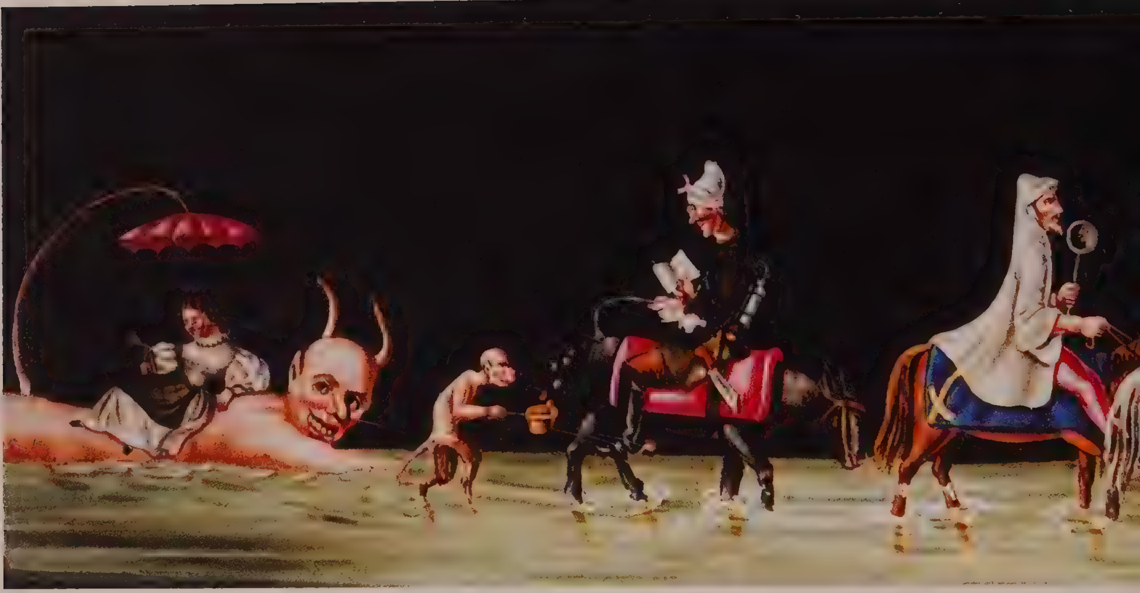
lantern, a special oil-lamp-and-lens arrangement that projected images from painted glass slides, was more than a century old when Robertson employed it. There had been many previous magic-lantern shows—some even entitled *Phantasmagoria*—but Robertson chose to conceal his technology rather than display it. Instead, his lanterns were hidden from the audience behind thin gauze screens that had been treated with wax. His slides were finished with black paint around the images to disguise their rectangular frames when projected. They depicted skeletons and demons; they showed images of Robespierre, Jean-Paul Marat, and Georges Danton, recent victims of the Reign of Terror. He also added tracks and wheels, as well as adjustable lenses, to his lanterns. When Robertson's hidden assistants rolled the magic lanterns away from the stationary gauze screens that concealed them, the images suddenly enlarged. Other effects involved projecting the images onto undulating clouds of smoke.

The basic secret is easy to understand. But *Phantasmagoria* was also an ingenious work of psychology. Robertson's finicky attention to the incantations, fires, and potions—elements of alchemy and witchcraft borrowed from the oldest magic performances—distracted his audiences from the state-of-the-art technology responsible



ABOVE AND RIGHT: **1829 and ca. 1830**
The frontispiece to *The Universal Conjuror, or the Whole Art of Legerdemain*, published in London, pictured the phantasmagoria with a projected skeleton appearing on misty clouds of smoke. An actual glass phantasmagoria slide, right, shows the eerie skeletal image that would have materialized.

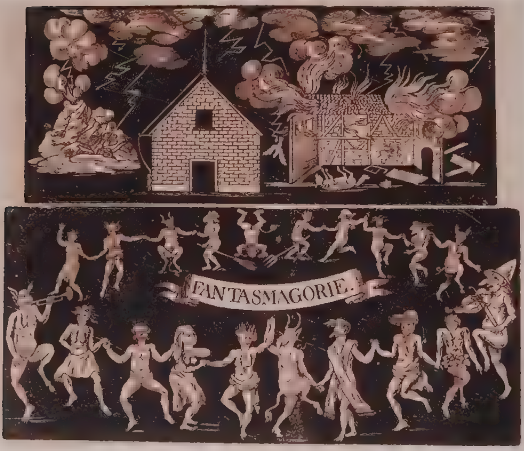


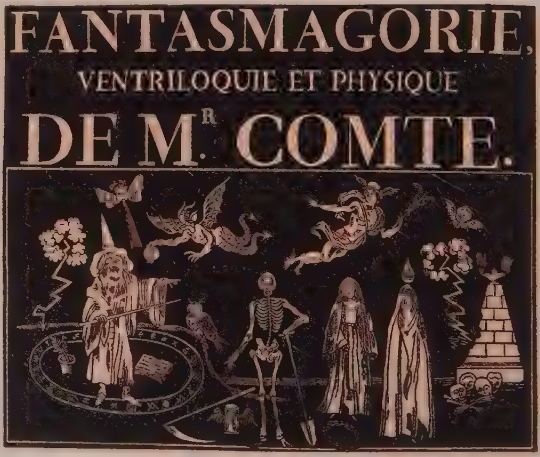


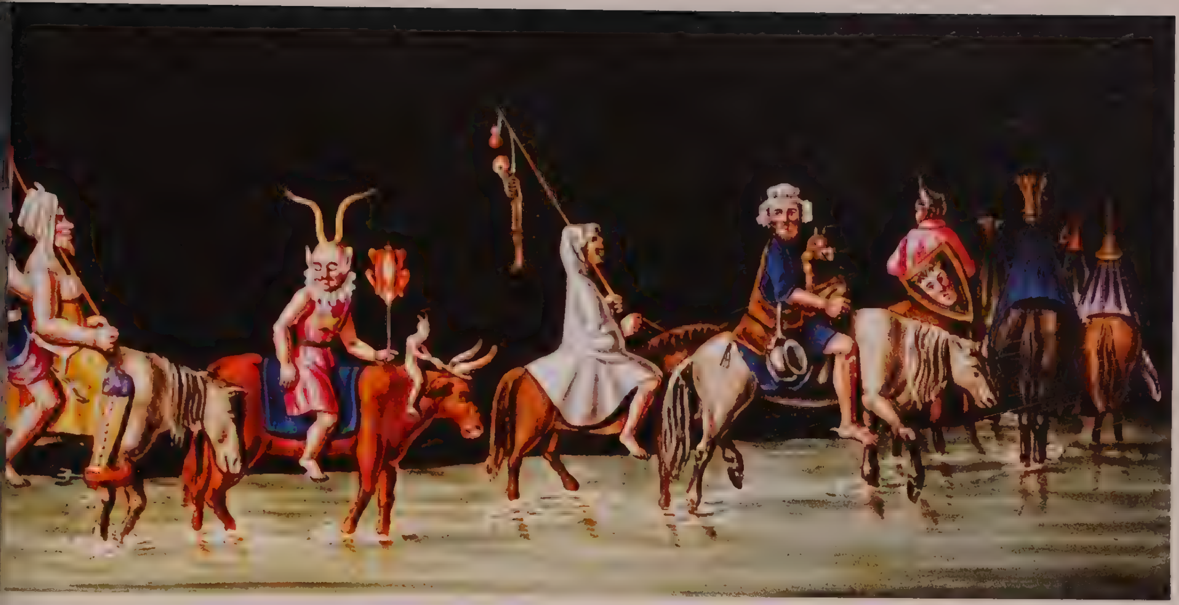
ABOVE: **ca. 1790** This meticulously painted lantern slide, designed to be pulled past the projector, shows a comical procession of travelers. Notice how the perspective changes; at first (at the far right), we seem to be part of the procession, behind the horses. Then we turn to look at our fellow travelers. A gigantic devil chases us all.

BELOW LEFT: **ca. 1820** This wood-block poster advertises a phantasmagoria show by the French performer Mr. Bienvenu. The vibrant tints on the glass slides were well suited to lurid images. This poster shows the rolling clouds and flashing images of a lightning storm and views of a house engulfed in flames.

BELOW RIGHT: **ca. 1812** Louis Comte was a brilliant French magician, sleight-of-hand artist, comedian, and ventriloquist. He was also a pragmatic showman. He included phantasmagoria images in his performances when it became a popular fashion across Europe. This poster advertising Comte's appearance offers the usual parade of supernatural beings, summoned for the audience.





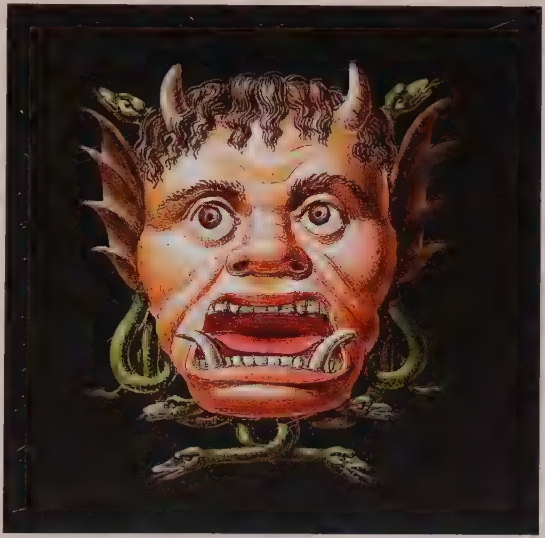


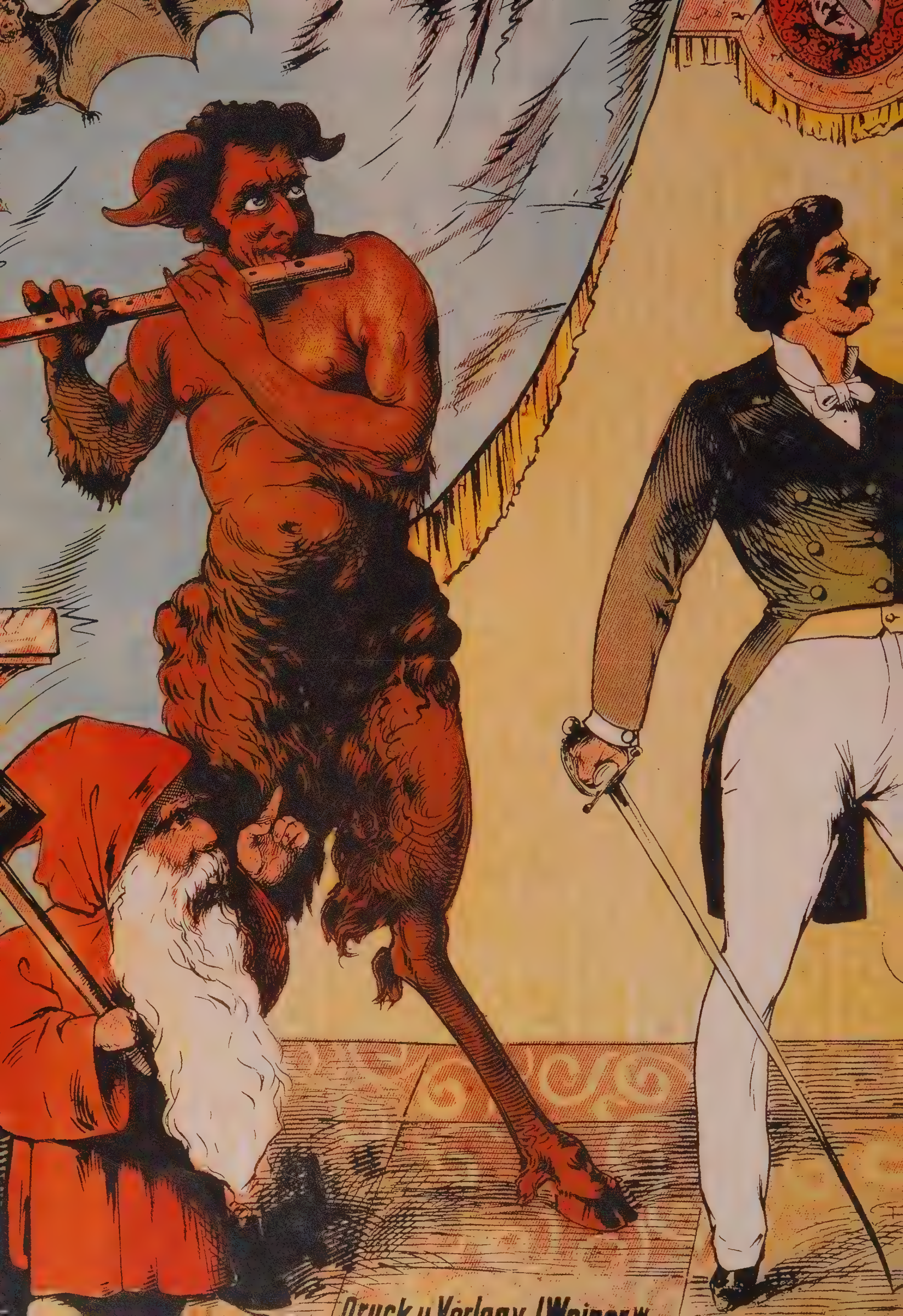
BELOW: **ca. 1830** When a narrow section is pulled at the edge of this magic-lantern slide, the demon rolls his eyes to the right or left, as if surveying his audience. These animated slides—dancing figures, shifting clouds, or rolling ships on waves—were the "special effects" of their day.

PAGES 204–205: **ca. 1840** This Viennese stock poster was used to advertise phantasmagoria performances. The magician uses the smoke from a brazier to produce his supernatural cast, including a gnome, a devil, an oracle, and Death himself.

for his illusions. By using a number of confederates scattered among the crowd, Robertson was also able to stage the proper requests, as well as the fevered reactions. But even more importantly, *Phantasmagoria* delivered the perfect chills to the perfect audience. With the Revolution, Paris citizens had endured real terrors; now they were dared to be engaged, or amused, by Robertson's theatrical terror.

With its success, *Phantasmagoria* was moved to an even more evocative setting in Paris, an abandoned chapel in a Capuchin convent surrounded by stone tombs, where Robertson added the ringing of church bells and the rumble of artificial thunder to his dark spectacle. He later took his show to Vienna and St. Petersburg. A Belgian magician, Paul de Philipsthal, copied the performance and imported it to a room at the Lyceum Theatre in London in 1802, and Robertson's son, Eugene, brought it to the United States in 1825. The show was not only a success, but a perfect visualization of the late 18th-century English gothic novels filled with ghosts and crumbling castles, the *Schauerromane* ("shudder novels") of Germany and the *romans noirs* ("black novels") of France. By the time of his death in 1837, Robertson had provided the inspiration for modern theatrical horrors, demonstrating our timeless intrigue with the supernatural and the simple appeal of goose bumps. Just as the ancient priest, oracle, or medicine man demonstrated his ultimate powers by consorting with spirits, Robertson raised the stakes for magicians. Ghosts were now entertainment.

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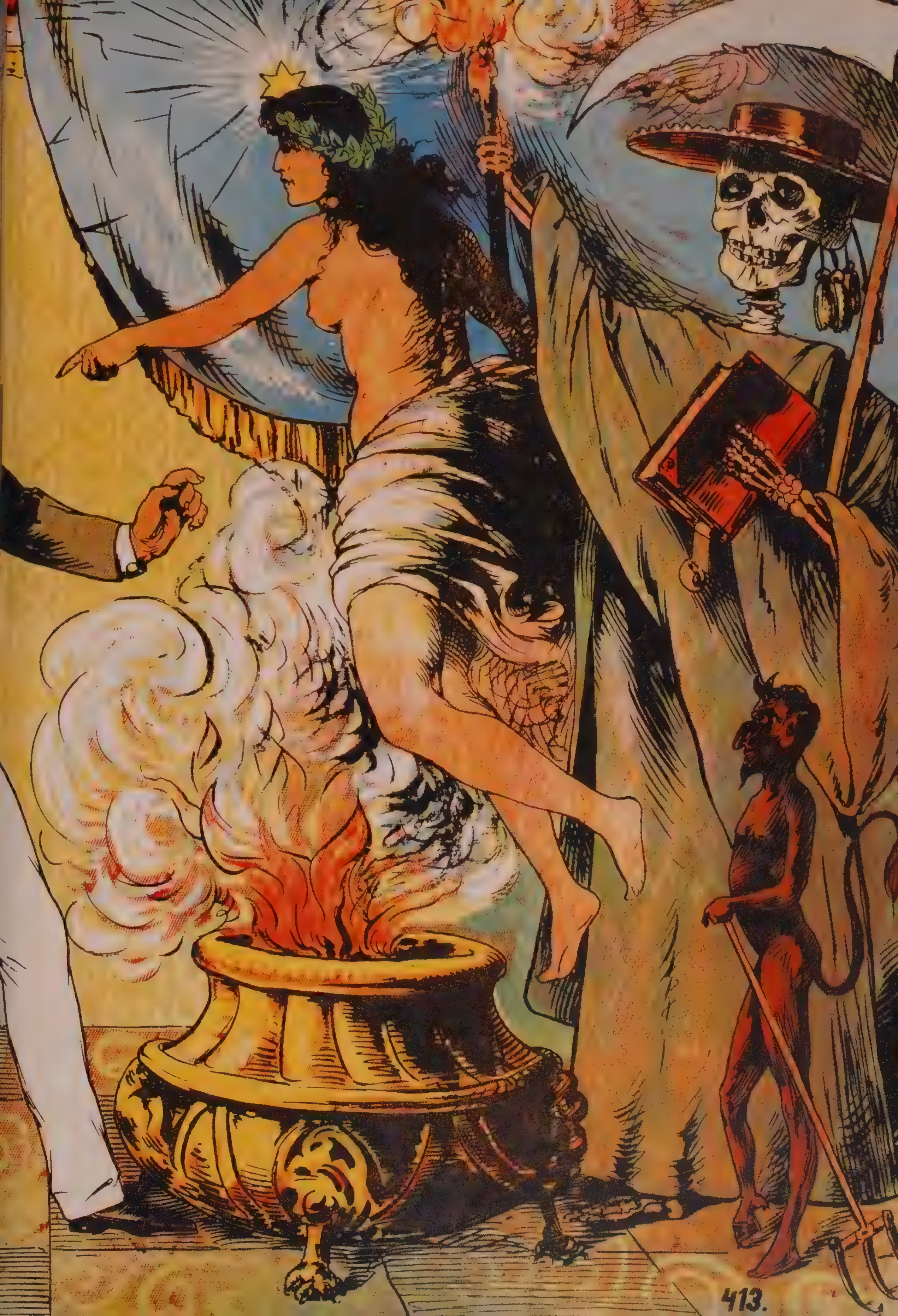
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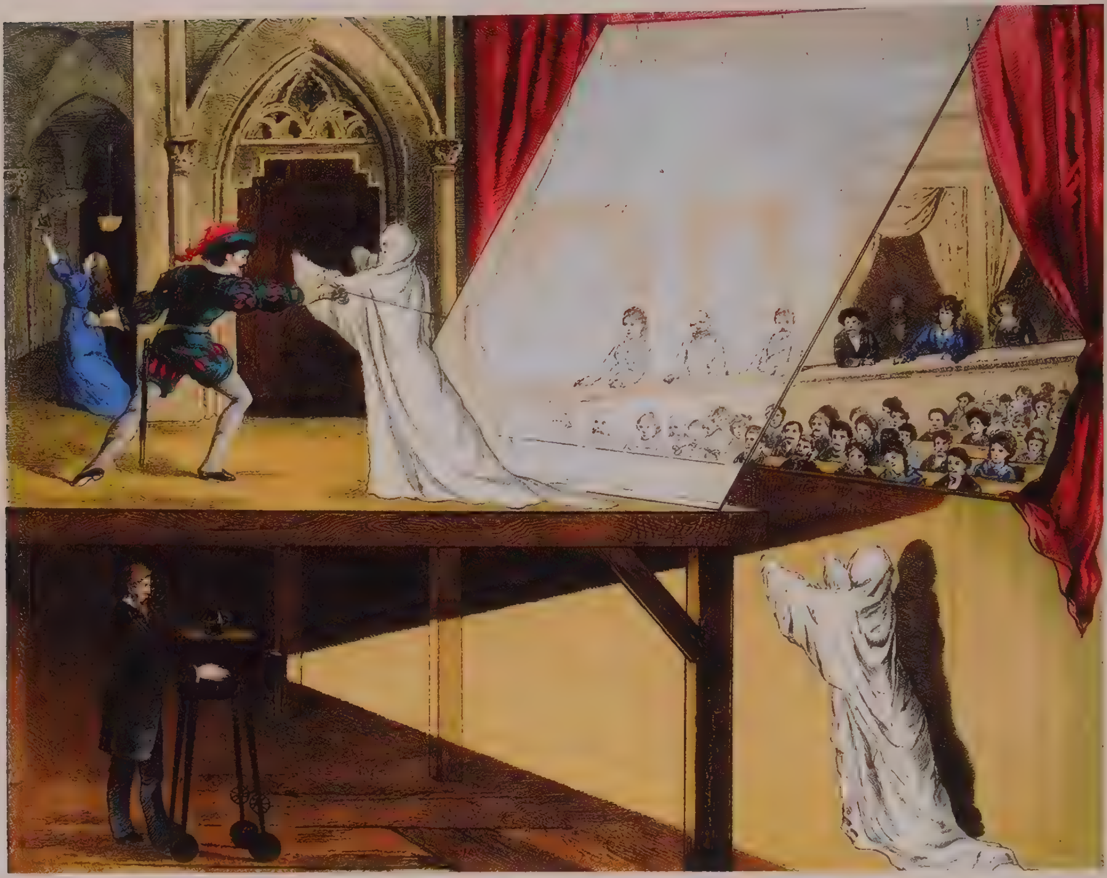
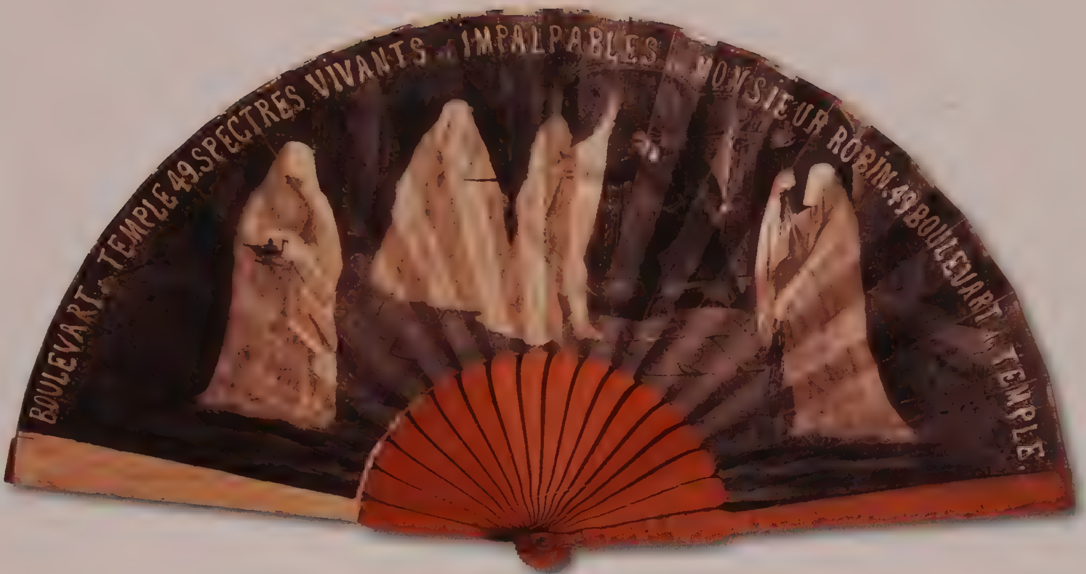


Pepper's Ghost: Superstar of the Spirit World

The most theatrical ghost to appear onstage—a superstar of the spirit world—was known as Pepper's Ghost. It first materialized on a small stage at London's Royal Polytechnic Institution on Regent Street, a collection of museum displays and lecture rooms that had achieved a reputation for sensational, P. T. Barnum–like attractions. On Christmas Eve 1862, the audience watched a short pantomime, *The Haunted Man*: as a student toiled at his desk, a ghostly skeleton slowly materialized in the room. The student leaped from his chair and battled the skeleton, which faded away like mist. Unlike Robertson's projections, Pepper's Ghost was fully dimensional—a seemingly real being who could interact with the flesh-and-blood actors in a scene.

The illusion could have been called Porta's Ghost, Séguin's Ghost, or even Dircks's Ghost, for the simple idea behind it had been described by the Italian researcher John Baptista Porta in his *Magiae naturalis* (*Natural Magic*) in 1558, was patented as a toy by the French artist Pierre Séguin in 1852, and had been developed similarly by Henry Dircks, a British civil engineer, in 1858. Dircks christened it—with a nod to his predecessor—the Dircksian Phantasmagoria, and demonstrated the illusion with a small model. Dircks's idea was to use an enormous sheet of window glass in front of the stage, invisible to the audience. Both transparent and reflective at the same time, the glass reflected an actor who, dressed in white, played the ghost offstage. When the audience looked through the glass to the stage, they saw the translucent reflected image superimposed onto the scene. The phenomenon can be simply demonstrated by staring out of a window at night from a lighted room—you see your own illuminated image combined with the dark elements outdoors.

When Dircks's idea was proposed to London's Royal Polytechnic, the honorary director, Professor John Henry Pepper, instantly understood its potential. He improved the invention, changing the angle of the glass so it would fit on the Polytechnic stage, and utilized a new invention, the oxyhydrogen lamp, commonly called a limelight, to illuminate the ghost. Pepper recalled the first performance: "The effect of the first appearance of the apparition on my illustrious audience was startling in the extreme, and far beyond anything I could have hoped for and expected; so much so that, although I had previously settled to explain the whole modus operandi on that evening, I deferred doing so."


BOULEVART TEMPLE 49 SPECTRES VIVANTS IMPALPABLES MONSIEUR ROBIN 49 BOULEVART TEMPLE.

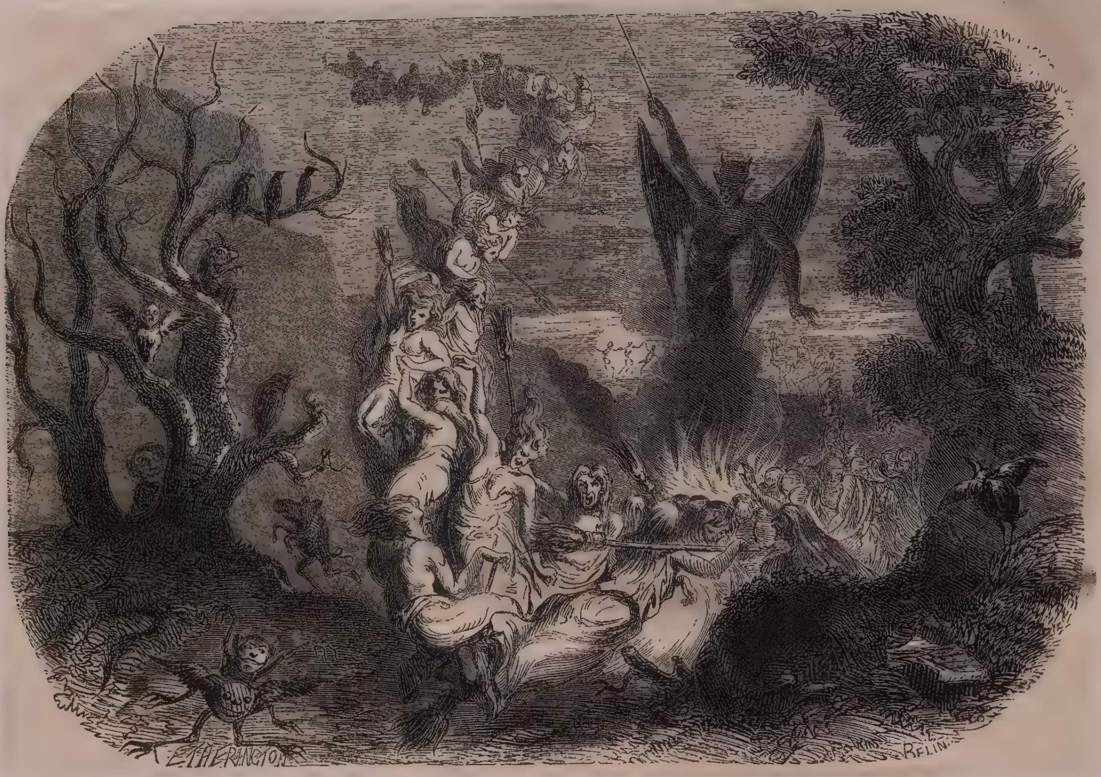
OPPOSITE: **1881** This engraving shows the secret behind Pepper's Ghost. The 1862 invention allowed transparent ghosts to interact with performers. The secret involved a large sheet of glass, across the front of the stage, invisible to the audience. The glass reflected the "ghosts" concealed in the pit below the stage. Careful rehearsal allowed the performers to interact.

ABOVE: **ca. 1863** Henri Robin, a magician and demonstrator of scientific novelties, was the first to bring the Ghost to Paris. Robin's souvenir fan depicts a duel with ghosts. This optical illusion allowed ghosts to move, gesture, or glide across the stage. During a sword fight, the magician's weapon passed through the misty images.

BELOW: **ca. 1890** An anonymous magician duels with a shrouded ghost. The photograph is purely the work of double exposure, but it re-creates the popular effect from Pepper's Ghost and Robin's performances, in which the ghosts are challenged with a sword.

Ghosts were enjoying popularity in such plays as Dion Boucicault's 1852 productions *The Corsican Brothers* and *The Vampire*, and in such literature as Charles Dickens's sentimental Christmas ghost stories (the most famous being *A Christmas Carol*, which inspired plays at the Polytechnic). Pepper realized the value of his ghosts to producers, and licensed the invention to London theaters. Pepper's Ghost appeared in a special play written for it, *Widows and Orphans*, at the Haymarket Theatre, and to enhance Byron's choral tragedy *Manfred* at Theatre Royal, Drury Lane. In 1863, a year after its premiere at the Polytechnic, the Bowery Theater in New York copied the illusion to use in a dozen ghostly plays, including *Macbeth*, *Hamlet*, and *The Tempest*.

According to Pepper, he received hundreds of letters from Spiritualists who had visited the Polytechnic and were convinced they had been watching the real thing. As a man of science, he was too embarrassed to answer these letters. As a showman, he was happy to watch the controversy grow. In 15 months, nearly a quarter million spectators had come to the Polytechnic to see the famous ghost. Since then, Pepper's Ghost has made occasional reappearances to haunt theaters, and is the secret behind the famous transparent ghosts at Disneyland's Haunted Mansion.



Séances Electrify the World

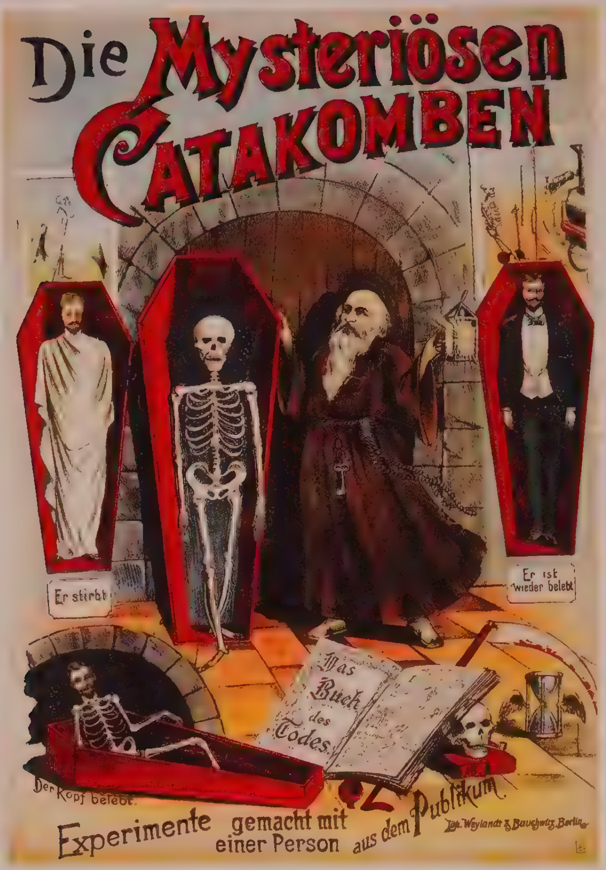
Professor Pepper's invention was trumped in 1864, when the Davenport Brothers performed in London. The Davenports, two of the most sensational and original performers in the history of magic, needed no glass or special lights. They produced their ghosts in the imaginations of the spectators (p. 216). Ira Erastus Davenport was born in 1839 in Buffalo, New York. His younger brother, William Henry Harrison Davenport, was born in 1841. The family later moved to Rochester, New York, which turned out to be the right place at the right time. In that city, the séance sisters Margaret and Kate Fox were exhibiting their mysterious abilities to produce rapping sounds in a darkened room. Slightly younger than the Davenport boys, the Fox Sisters supposedly received communications from unseen ghosts. Accounts of their séances electrified the world and spawned the modern Spiritualist movement. The Davenports copied the sisters, and by the early 1850s were conducting their own séances in New York City.

These first Davenport séances were crude affairs. The young brothers sat innocently in a parlor with their clients; after the lights were extinguished, the clients' questions would be answered by the rattle of a tambourine or the strum of a guitar. When one customer surprised the boys by unexpectedly shining a policeman's lamp, Ira and William were exposed wandering around the room with the musical instruments in their hands. P. T. Barnum described

ABOVE: **ca. 1863** A newspaper illustration shows an imaginative view of Robin's effects onstage, using the Pepper's Ghost illusion. Here a grand procession of ghosts and witches shows a typical artist's exaggeration. Onstage, Robin's optical effects concentrated on only a few ghosts at a time.

OPPOSITE: **ca. 1864** Henri Robin used the secret of Pepper's Ghost to produce *The Ghost of Paganini* in his Paris theater. The short play depicted the famous Italian violin virtuoso, who had died decades earlier. As the character of Paganini played the violin, a transparent, glowing devil mysteriously appeared to torment him.

This detail of a *carte de visite* shows R. C. Levy, the actor who portrayed Paganini, in this humorous scene.


Die Mysteriösen Catakomben
Er stirbt
Er ist wieder belebt
Das Buch des Todes
Der Kopf belebt.
Experimente gemacht mit einer Person aus dem Publikum
Lith. Weylandt & Bauchwitz, Berlin

LEFT: **ca. 1890** A variation on Pepper's Ghost allowed a man to gradually turn into a skeleton. The illusion was not practical for stages, but was a popular sideshow attraction or dime-museum display. In Paris, it was exhibited in the Cabaret du Néant.

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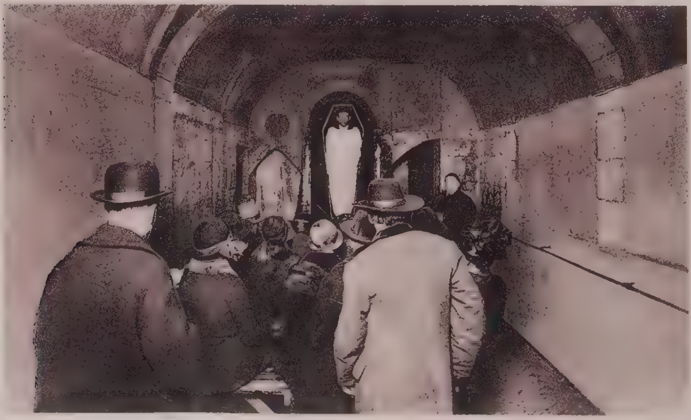
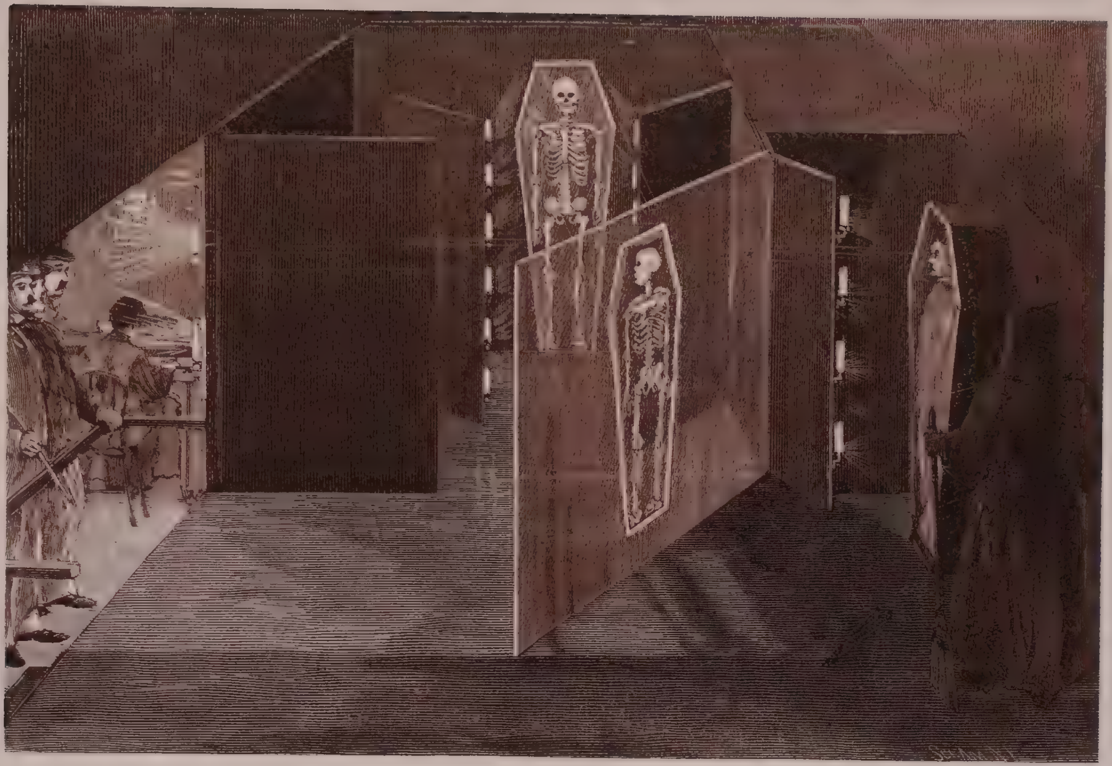
the result in *The Humbugs of the World* (1866): "The father of these boys, who had accompanied them to New York, took them home immediately after that exposure. In Buffalo, they {hoped} to retrieve their lost reputation ... by being not more honest, but more cautious. To secure greater immunity from detection, and to enable them to exhibit in large halls which could not easily be darkened, the boys finally fixed upon a 'cabinet.'"

The cabinet was a large wide wooden wardrobe, about seven feet high, six feet wide, and two feet deep, with three upright doors (p. 219). Spectators tied the boys securely as they sat inside the cabinet, facing each other on two plank benches. The doors were then closed and the manifestations occurred. Raps and knocks were heard. A guitar was strummed. When the doors were opened, the brothers were now untied, with the ropes at their feet. The doors



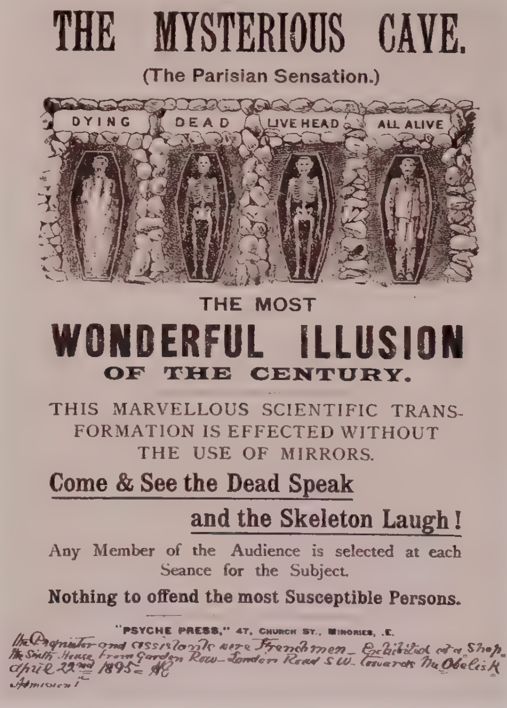
LEFT: **ca. 1890** The Cabaret du Néant was an odd, death-themed Parisian nightclub that incorporated several chilling illusions. In the image a man from the audience, standing in a coffin, gradually changed into a grinning skeleton. Another spectator, seated in a chair, was teased and stroked by a ghost, but could neither see it nor feel it.



were again closed, and when they were reopened, the brothers were found securely tied. Finally, a spectator was seated in the cabinet between the brothers. When the doors were closed, he found himself roughed up by the spirits—hands pulled at his hair or tugged at his clothes. The doors opened moments later. The boys were still tied. The spectator was disheveled, with his necktie on one brother, his glasses on the other, and wearing a tambourine as a fedora.

ABOVE: 1894 The secret of the Cabaret du Néant, like that of Pepper's Ghost, involved a large sheet of glass that reflected an unseen skeleton, concealed on one side of the stage. The illusion called for precise adjustments of props, lights, and costumes, and could only be seen by a small group of people at one time.

RIGHT: 1895 The Mysterious Cave was a British version of the Cabaret du Néant. The notion that magic was all "done with mirrors" had become a cliché, so this handbill insisted that the feat was performed "Without the Use of Mirrors." That was a technicality. It used a sheet of glass, not a mirror.



THE MYSTERIOUS CAVE.

(The Parisian Sensation.)

DYING
DEAD
LIVE HEAD
ALL ALIVE

THE MOST

WONDERFUL ILLUSION

OF THE CENTURY.

THIS MARVELLOUS SCIENTIFIC TRANSFORMATION IS EFFECTED WITHOUT THE USE OF MIRRORS.

Come & See the Dead Speak

and the Skeleton Laugh!

Any Member of the Audience is selected at each Seance for the Subject.

Nothing to offend the most Susceptible Persons.

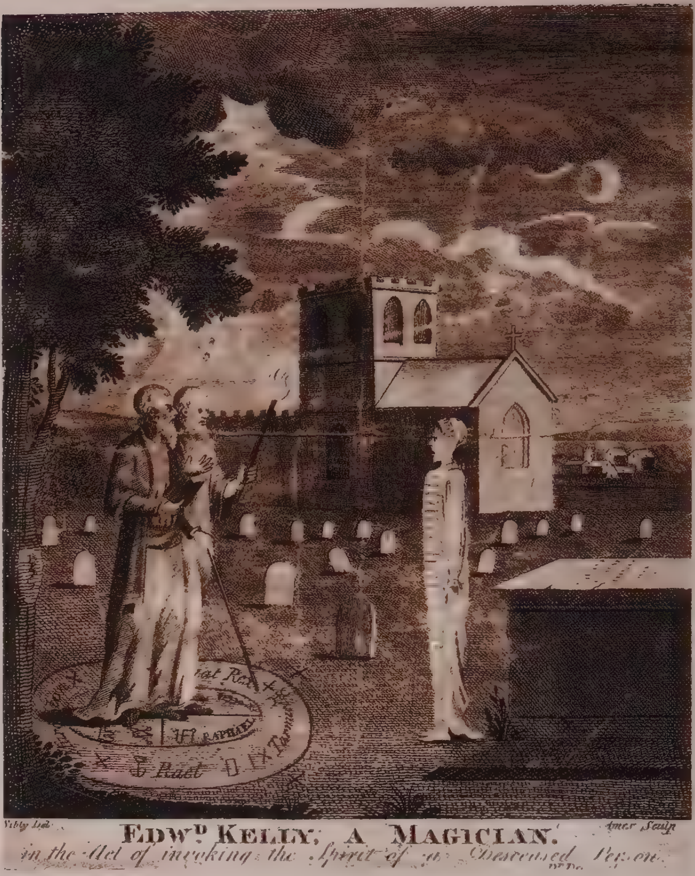
"PSYCHE PRESS," 47, CHURCH ST., MINORIES, .E.

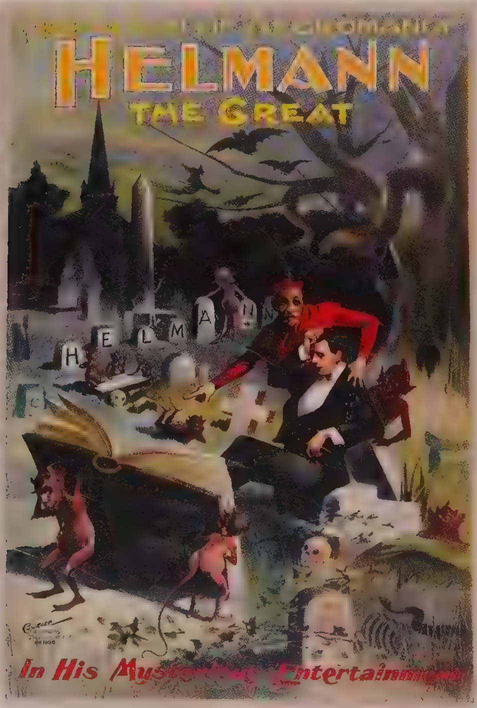
the Proprietor and assistants were Frenchmen_ Exhibited at a Shop the Sixth House from Garden Row_ London Road S.W. towards the Obelisk April 22nd 1895= [illegible] Admission!

OPPOSITE: **ca. 1869** Hennetier and Habert's sculpted image, photographed and hand-tinted on a glass slide, depicts a group of humorous skeletons. The first appearance of Pepper's Ghost, in 1862, also centered on a comic skeleton; the animated skeleton appeared, waved its arms, and disappeared again, providing chills and laughs at the same time.

RIGHT: **ca. 1806** For centuries, raising ghosts from the dead was considered an act of real alchemy or necromancy, not the work of a stage magician. This engraving portrays Edward Kelly, a famous 16th-century British alchemist, as he conducted his spells in the graveyard. With the popularity of phantasmagoria shows and Pepper's Ghost, graveyard images and spirits were now featured by stage performers.

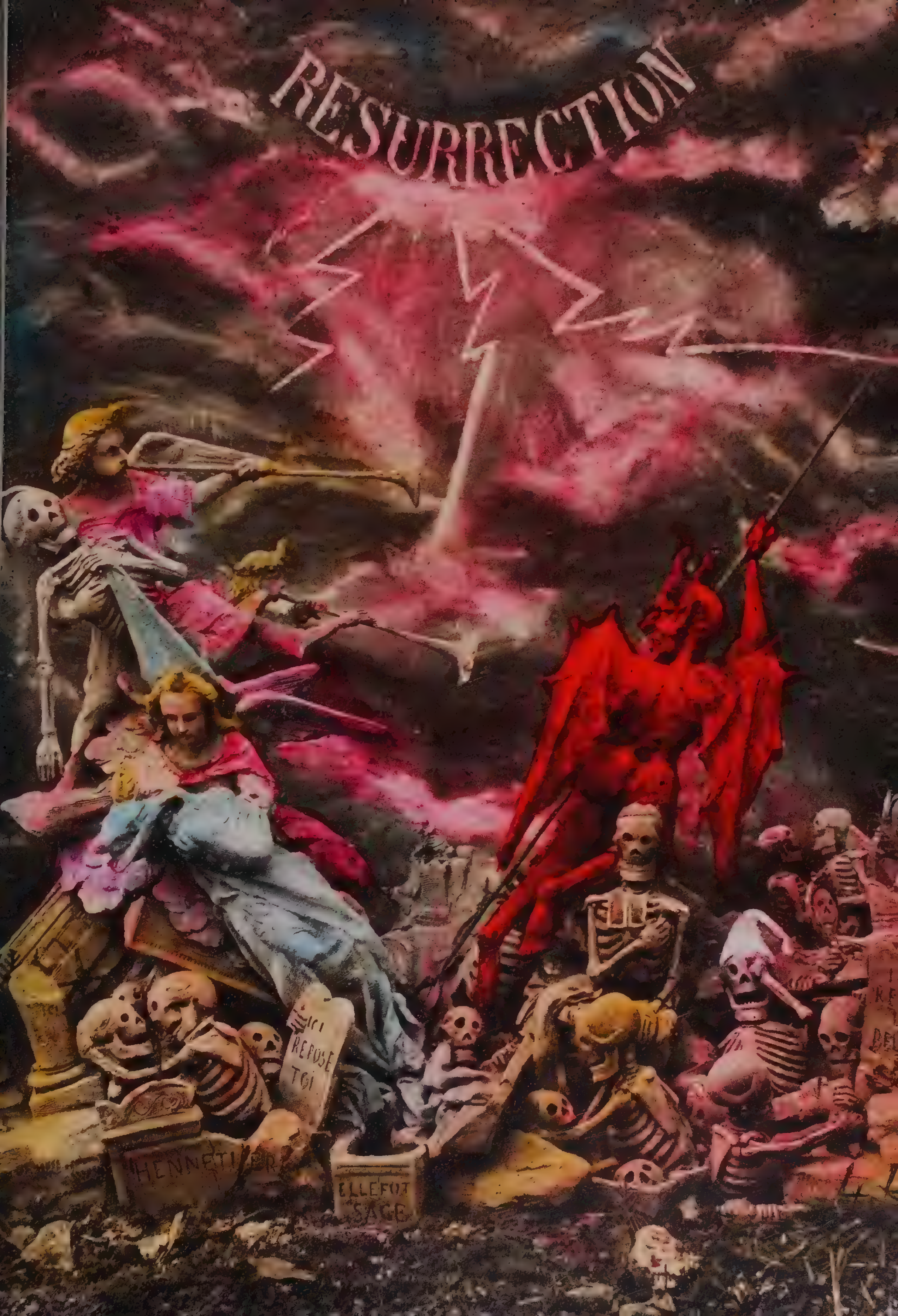
BELOW: **ca. 1899** Professor Helmann (H. Morgan Robinson) was a Washington, D.C., magician who copied the feats of the famous Davenport Brothers and included a séance in his performances. To capitalize on his ghostly effects, this poster depicted him learning his secrets in a graveyard, tutored by the Devil!


Raphael
Sibly Del.
Amer Sculp
EDWD. KELLY, A MAGICIAN.
in the Act of invoking the Spirit of a Deceased Person.



By the time they arrived in Europe, in 1864, the Davenport Brothers were stars. But their European audiences took particular offense at their supernatural claims and "Yankee" nerve. When they brought the show to Liverpool, they were challenged with especially brutal knots, drawing blood. The Davenports stopped the show, and the angry crowd stormed the stage and smashed the cabinet to pieces. In September 1865, when the boys brought their new cabinet to Paris, they were met with Edmond About's challenge in the newspaper *Opinion Nationale*: "Do you take Paris for one of those two-penny-half-penny country villages...? Is it not passing strange that in the year of 1865, when the whole of the human race is pressing with rapid strides in the direction of progress, an attempt should be made to revive these supernatural tomfooleries?"

Not surprisingly, just days after their Paris opening, the controversy boiled over. Suspecting that the brothers had somehow escaped from their ropes, a spectator ran to the cabinet and smashed a panel, looking for the secret. The crowd followed onto the stage, and the police arrived to clear the hall. The Davenports ducked out of sight, and the ensuing riot exploded onto the street. The *Gazette des Étrangers* recorded the scene: "There was a great deal of noise, and a good deal of spite displayed... Even at this late


RESURRECTION
ICI REPOSE TOI
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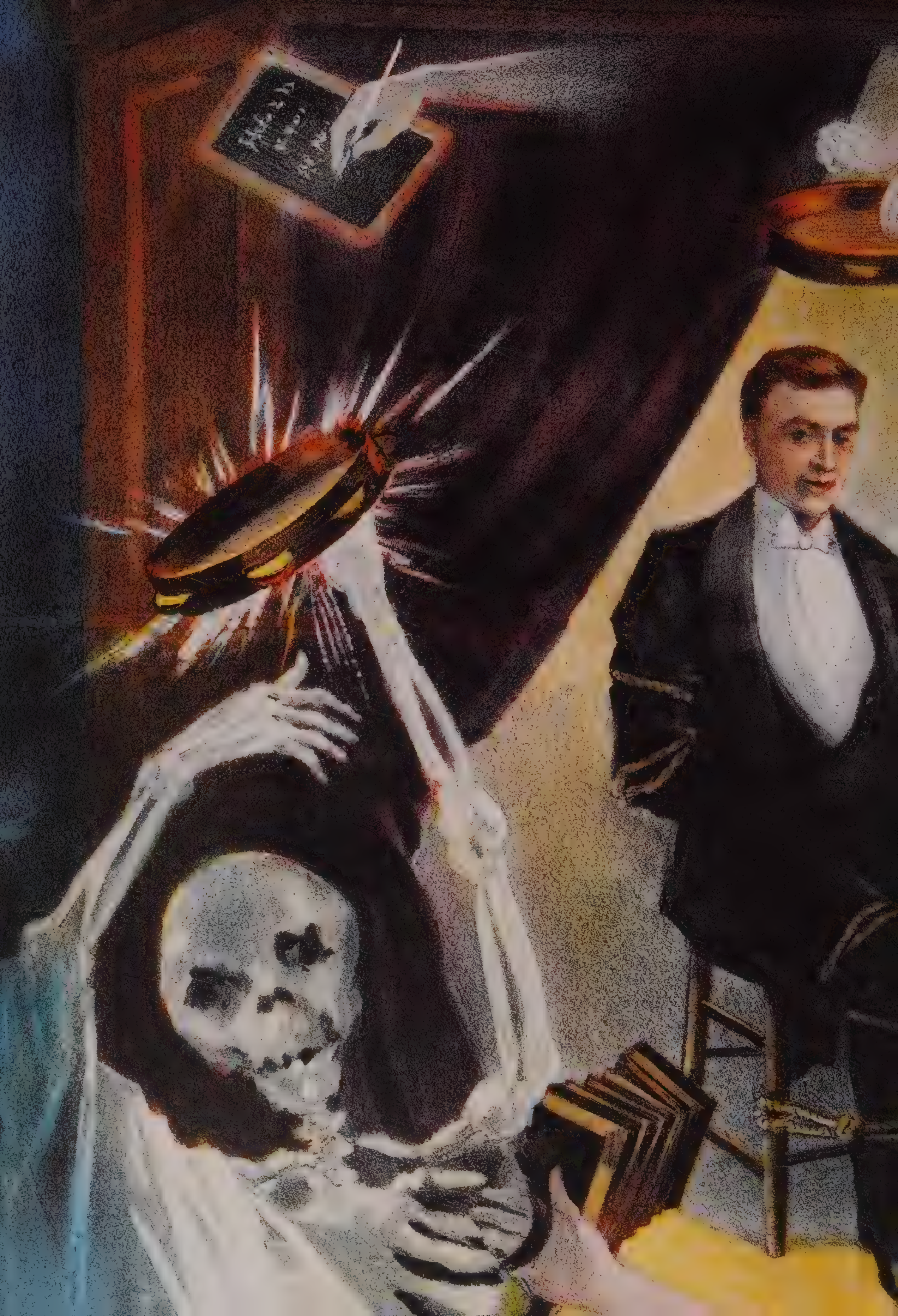
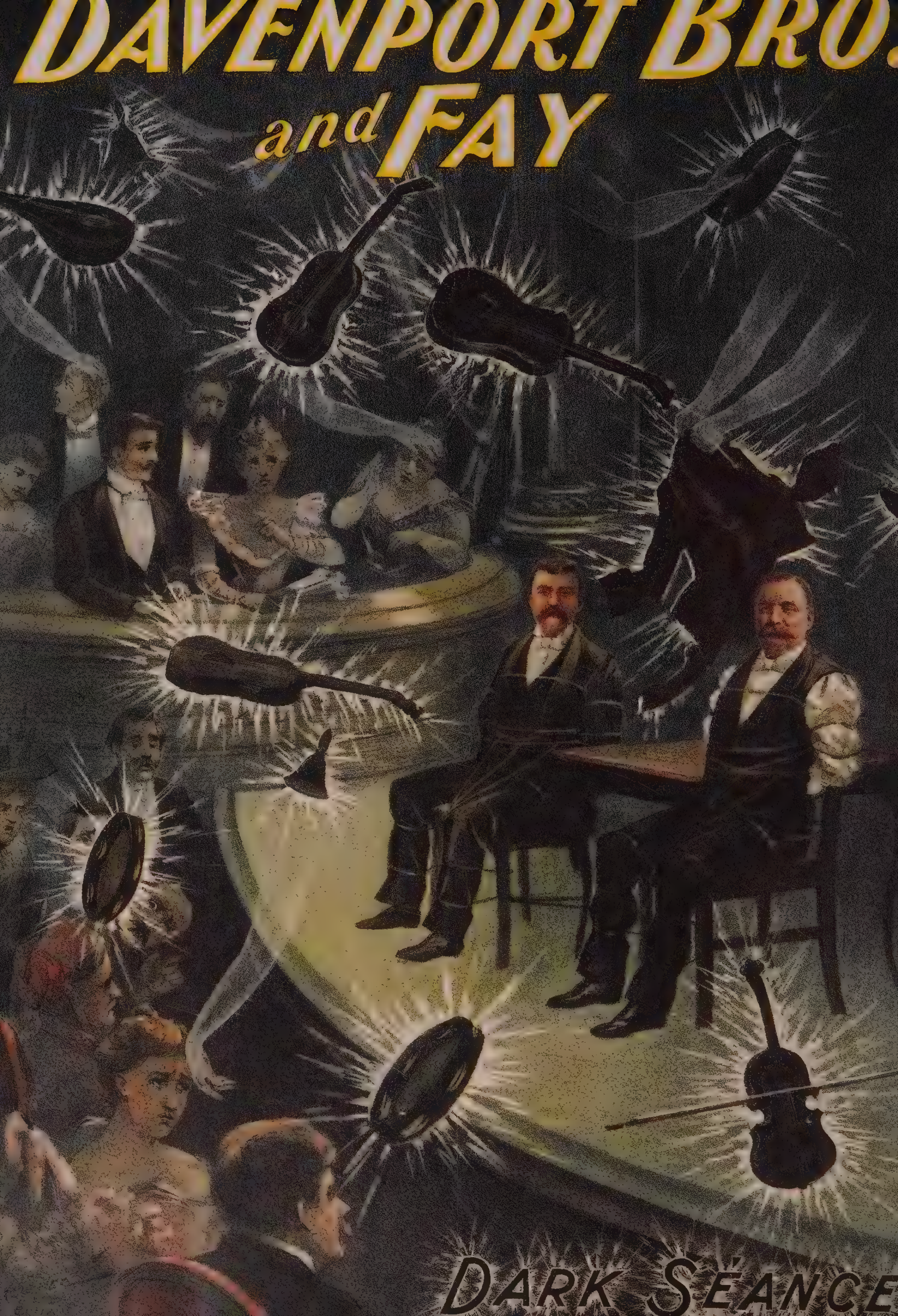
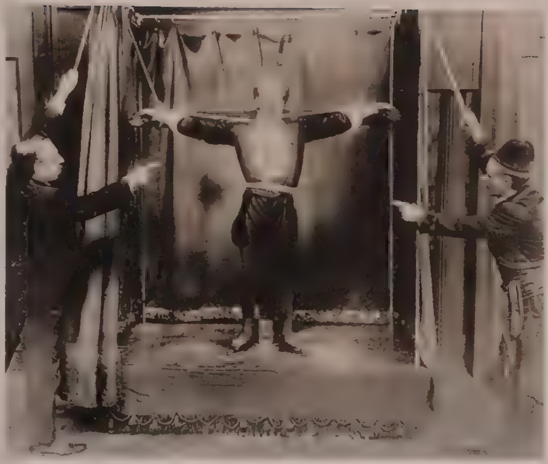


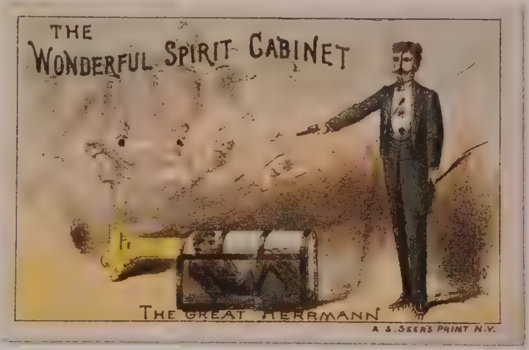

DAVENPORT BRO
and FAY
DARK SÉANCE



PAGES 214–215: **ca. 1899** This poster detail depicts the magician Helmann in his spirit cabinet. During the performance, the curtains were closed on this simple framework cabinet, and the ghosts seemed to gather inside, ringing bells or rattling tambourines. The ghosts were never actually seen, but were left to the audience's imagination.

LEFT AND BELOW: **ca. 1910 and ca. 1879** The spirit cabinet formula invited elaborate variations, and more challenging bonds for the mediums. Felix Herrmann, left, a nephew of Adelaide Herrmann, was tied to a cross in his cabinet. His uncle, the Great Herrmann, below, began by locking his assistant in a trunk.

OPPOSITE: **1894** Ira and William Davenport, two quiet brothers from Buffalo, New York, were the first to put a spirit séance onstage and suggest that real ghosts could be part of a public show. When they appeared throughout England and Europe with their manager, William Fay, audiences argued about whether the famous brothers were genuine mediums or mere frauds. This poster, from a later tour, shows Ira Davenport and Fay, after William Davenport's death.

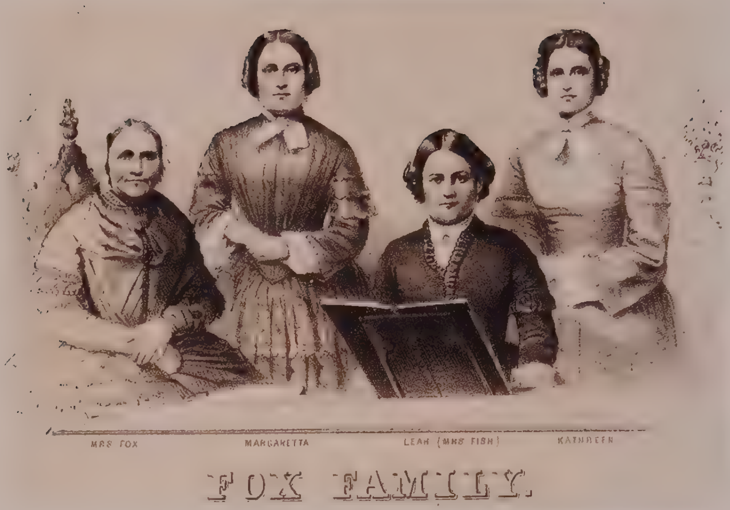


hour at which I write these lines (midnight), the Boulevards are still in a high state of excitement and nothing is spoken of but the Davenports." The Davenports made no claims during their performances, but always employed a lecturer who extolled the virtues of Spiritualism and credited the brothers with genuine powers. It was a treacherous, high-stakes way to demonstrate their deceptions. Their work put them at odds with a number of magicians, who proudly proclaimed that these Spiritualist frauds had crossed a line—they were not offering amusement, but unfairly playing on the faith of their audience. Nevertheless, the Davenport Brothers continued to perform, thriving on this controversy, until William's death in 1877.

By then the act had inspired many imitators. The most successful was a tiny, blonde-haired, blue-eyed woman from Ohio named Anna Eva Fay. Born Ann Eliza Heathman in 1851, as a child she had imitated the Fox Sisters with dark séance demonstrations. After she married, her husband, a fraudulent medium named Henry Melville Fay, taught her the secret of the Cotton Bandage Test, a clever illusion created in 1864 by Marshall Ellis. In this illusion, Fay's wrists were tied behind her back, using strips of white muslin. Another strip was tied around her neck. She was seated inside a small curtained cabinet, where the muslin was knotted against an upright wooden post. Although Fay was immobilized by the post, she produced amazing manifestations every time the curtains were closed: a bell rang, a few notes were played on a violin, and water disappeared from a glass. When a piece of paper and scissors were placed in her lap, she produced a string of paper dolls. Anna Eva Fay had a long career, stretching into vaudeville before her retirement in 1924 (p. 232). Much of her success was due to her personal charm and appearance: when this delicate Victorian lady was securely bound, she combined images of the helpless woman and the powerful priestess, the interpreter between this world and mysterious, controlling forces. Sweet and demure, Fay seemed incapable of trickery. Her billing described her as "the Indescribable Phenomenon."

Spirits as Entertainment

At the end of the 19th century, variations on the cabinet séance were popular in the shows of the biggest stars in magic, like Harry Kellar, who traveled with the Davenport Brothers early in his career; John Nevil Maskelyne, who exposed the brothers and publicized Spiritualism as fraud but his own séances as entertainment; and Alexander Herrmann, who was initially mystified by the Davenports'



LEFT: **1851** The modern Spiritualist movement began in 1848 when the two youngest Fox daughters spoke to a ghost in their family cottage in Hydesville, New York. The ghost apparently answered questions with a mysterious series of coded raps.

OPPOSITE: **1866** When the Davenports appeared in Paris, the noted photographer André-Adolphe-Eugène Disdéri photographed them seated inside their famous cabinet, as if about to begin their puzzling séance act. Needing as much light as possible for his photograph, Disdéri had the cabinet placed on the street outside the theater.

PAGES 220–221: **1894** Harry Kellar improved the old Davenport séance act. In Kellar's show, the ghosts appeared in an empty cabinet, which was then disassembled in front of the audience to show that no one was hiding inside. The poster artist provided the imaginary creatures assisting Kellar.

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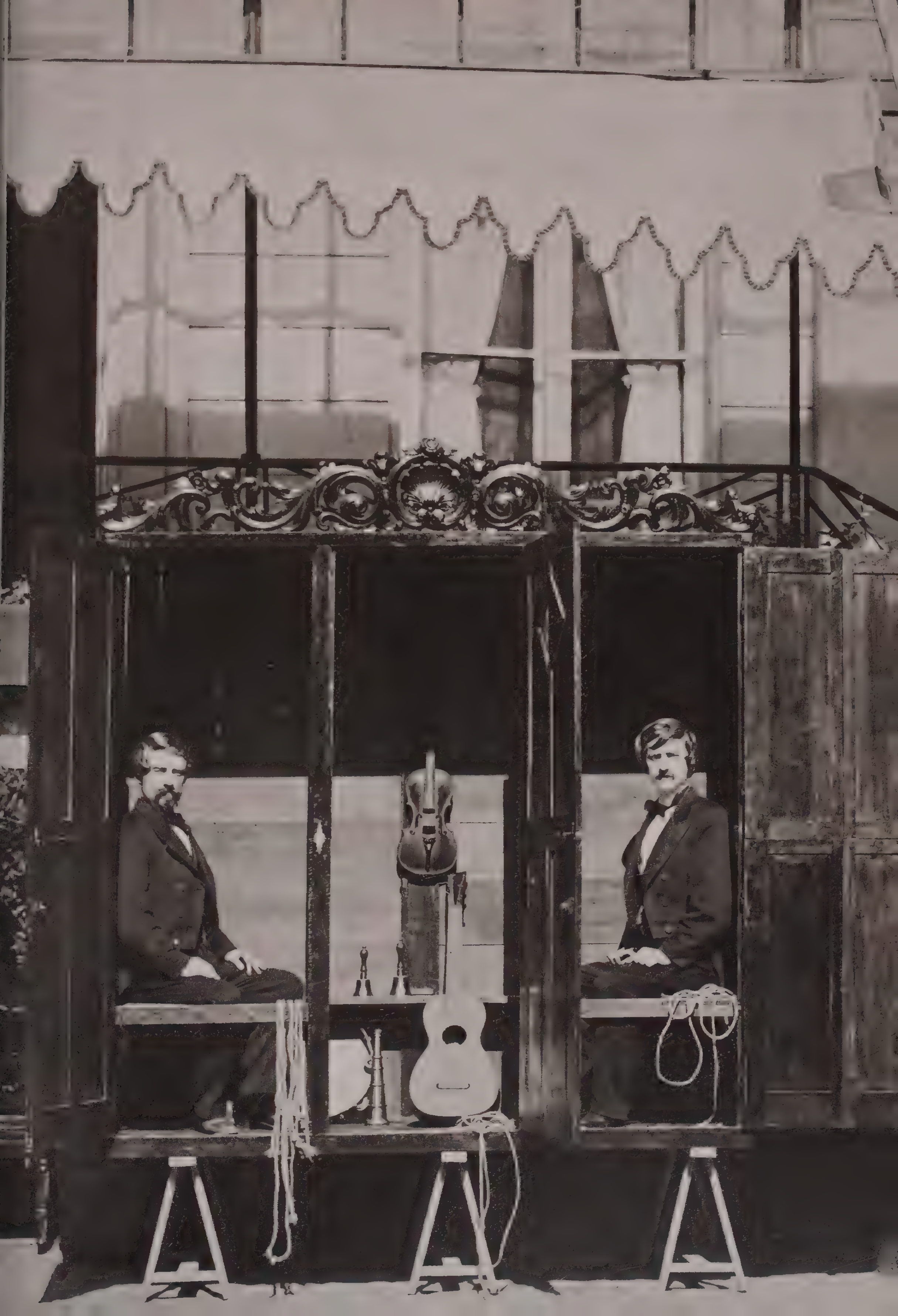
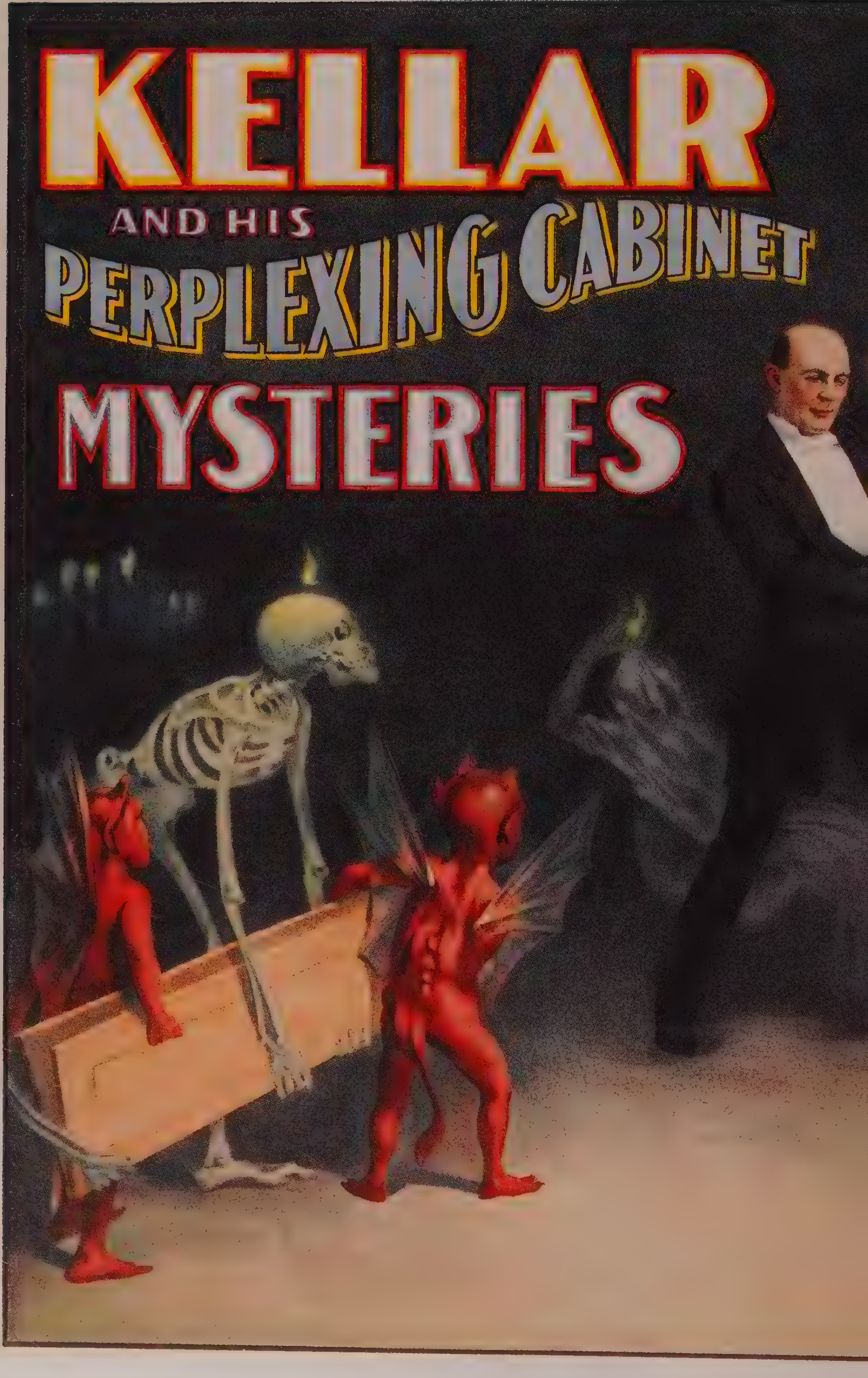
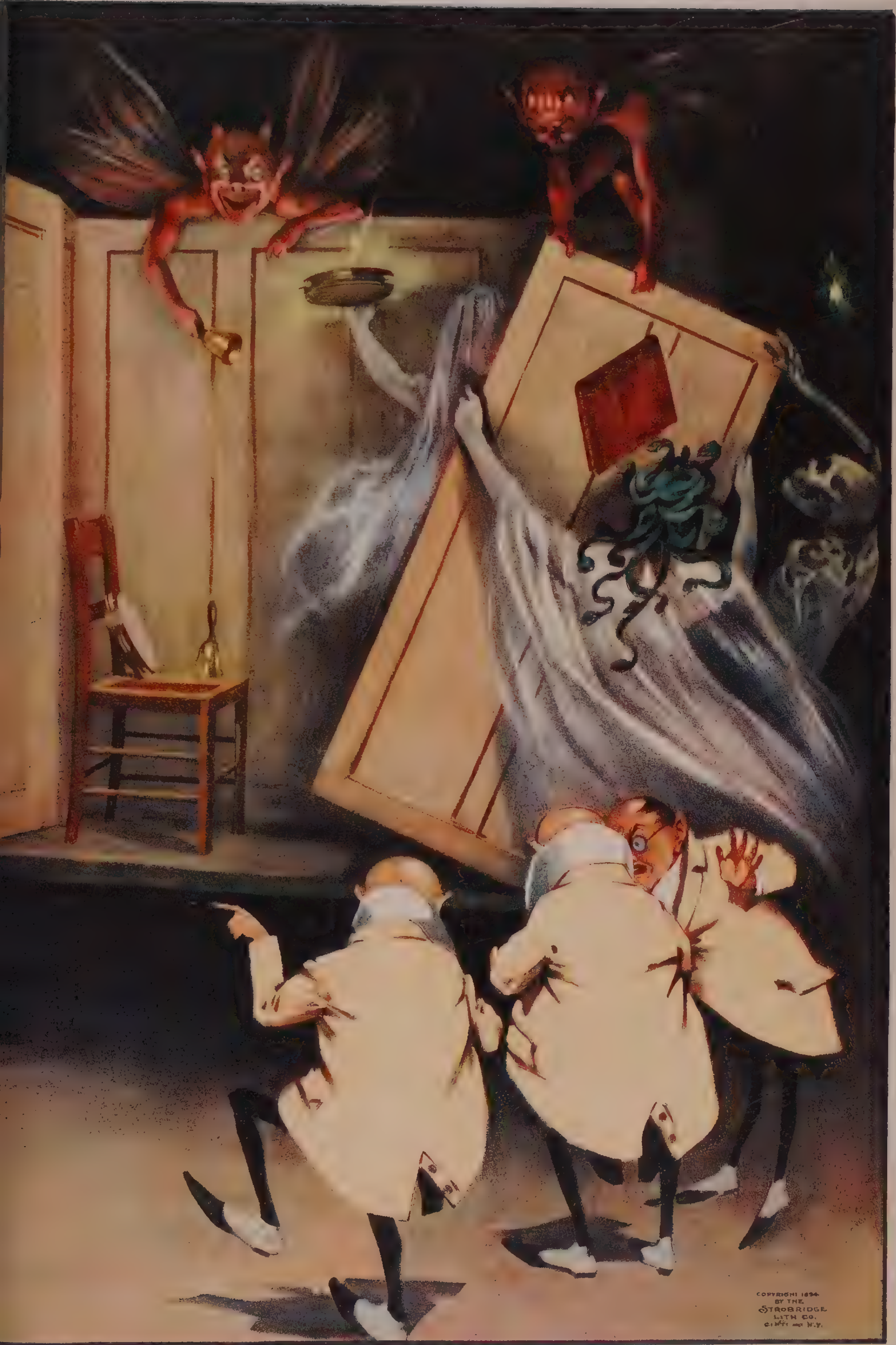
routine, but then produced his own imitation. Even small-town touring magicians like Gus Rapp and Willard the Wizard specialized in what was now widely known as the Spirit Cabinet.

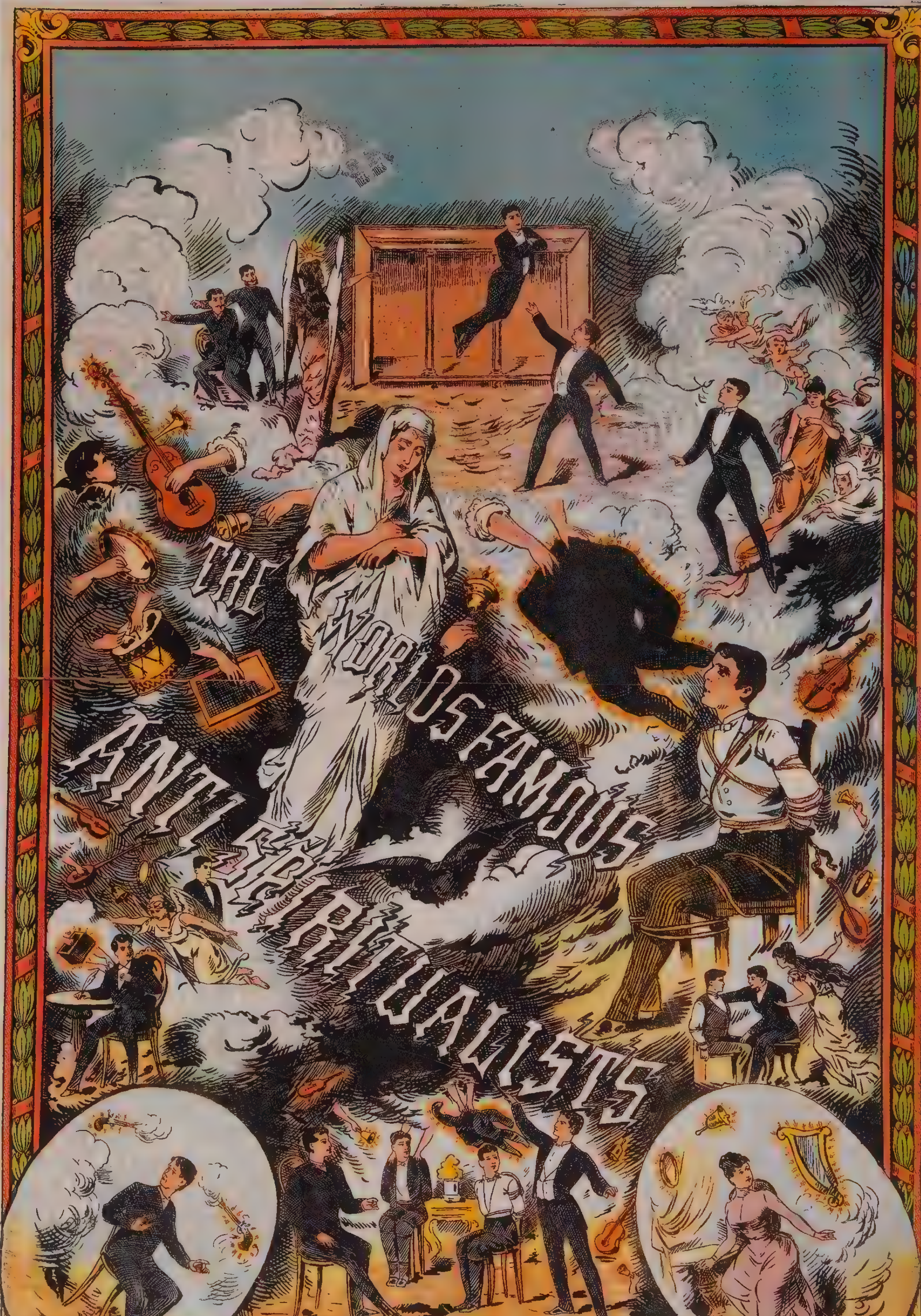
For the famous escape artist Harry Houdini, denouncing Spiritualism became a crusade. In the 1890s, early in his career, Houdini had briefly worked as a fraudulent medium in a séance room and was familiar with the basic tricks. After his mother's death in 1913, he made a sincere attempt to find out the truth about Spiritualism, but encountered only more fraud. During his final tour, in 1925 and 1926, Houdini climaxed his show with a sensational spiritual exposure: he denounced the Fox Sisters, told the truth about the Davenports, and demonstrated—with the lights on—how mediums duped their séance-room customers. He often invited local mediums to sit in his audience, and then, to their surprise, condemned them from the stage, or offered to duplicate their feats with mere trickery. Houdini collected lawsuits from mediums as he toured America, but his fans watched from the edges of their seats and roared their approval.

In his 1881 history of magic, *The Lives of the Conjurers*, author Thomas Frost scoffed at the Davenports' success. "If the Brothers Davenport had come before the public as acknowledged conjurers, their rope-tying feats, and the wonders they performed in their cabinet while they were supposed to be bound, would have puzzled the public... But the latter half of the nineteenth century is far too late in the development of the human mind for men to present themselves before the public audience, claiming to perform such tricks by supernatural aid." Like Reginald Scot three centuries earlier, Frost had decided that ghosts were a foolish delusion. "Bah, humbug," Scrooge himself might have said. Of course, today we tell ourselves that we're too sophisticated to believe in ghosts, but the promise of ghosts has always been too delicious to leave behind entirely. As Étienne-Gaspard Robertson realized, audiences can't resist the tingle of goose bumps.



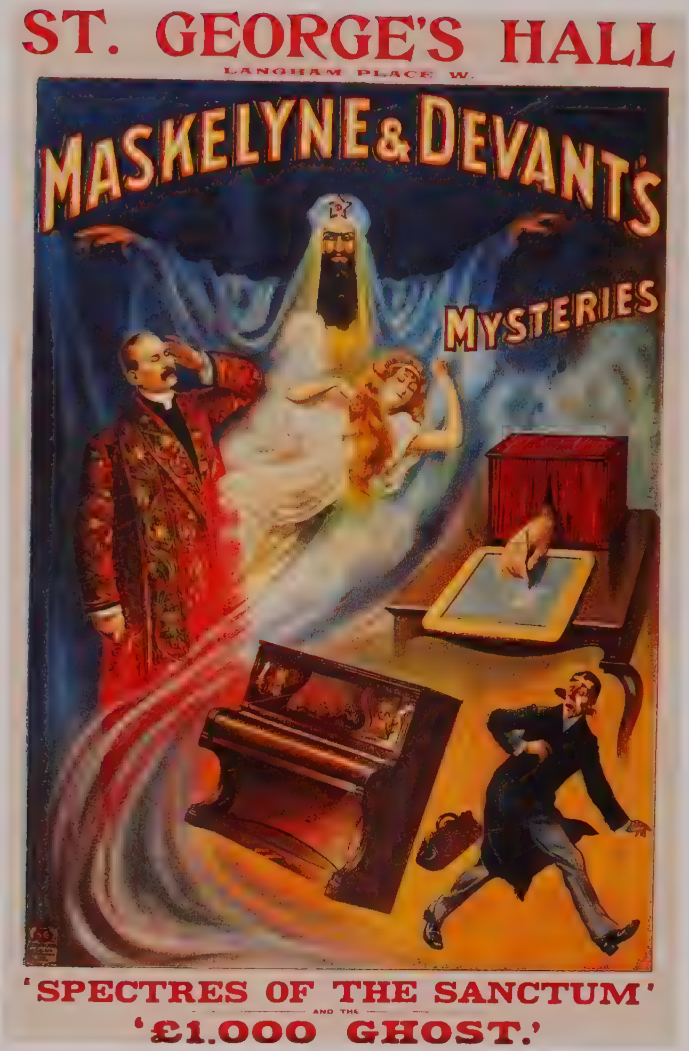

KELLAR
AND HIS
PERPLEXING CABINET
MYSTERIES

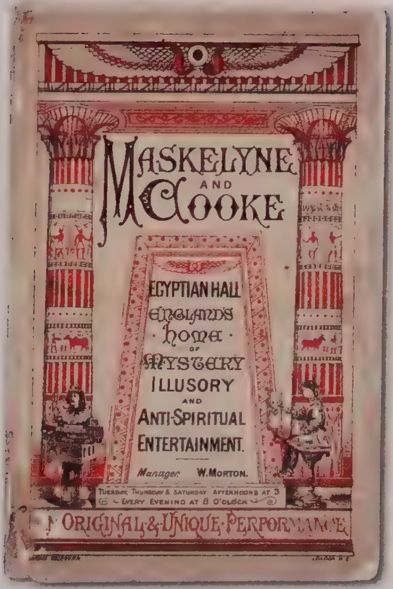

COPYRIGHT 1894
BY THE
STROBRIDGE
LITH CO.
CIN'TI and N.Y.


THE WORLDS FAMOUS
ANTI-SPIRITUALISTS
IMP EDIT. J. WEINER VIENNE, VIII, PARIS, 9 RUE BERGÈRE
435

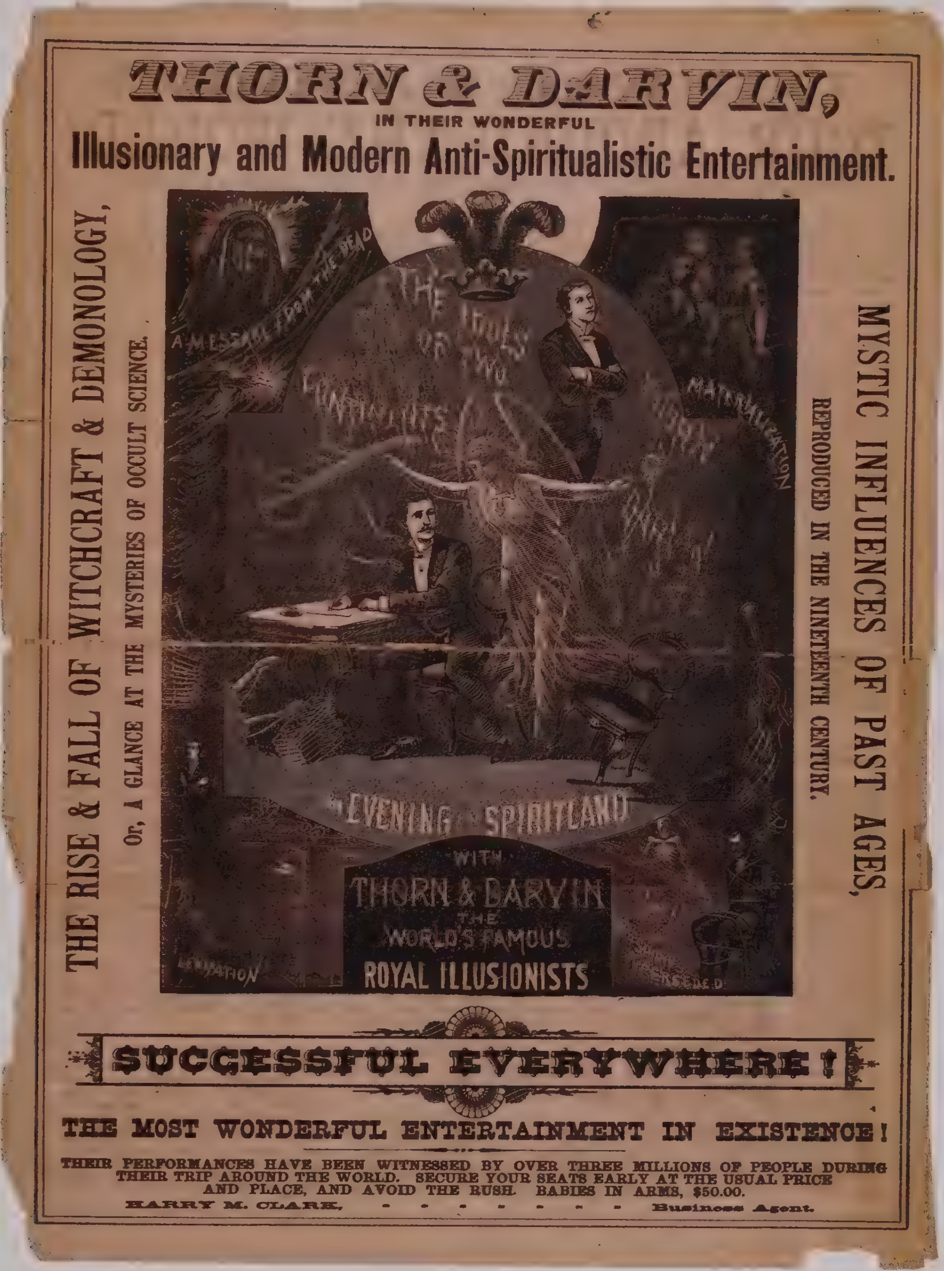
OPPOSITE: **ca. 1885** The British magicians John Nevil Maskelyne and John Henry Anderson proclaimed themselves "Anti-Spiritualists" and made it fashionable for magic shows to challenge séance-room frauds. This stock poster is filled with popular images derived from the Davenport séances and Maskelyne's demonstrations and exposures.

RIGHT: **1907** *Spectres of the Sanctum* was a Maskelyne play about two fraudulent mediums. It featured a weird effect of a ghost emerging from the side of the medium. British Spiritualist Thomas Colley claimed to have witnessed this feat in a séance room, and he challenged Maskelyne to duplicate it using magic.


ST. GEORGE'S HALL
LANGHAM PLACE W.
MASKELYNE & DEVANT'S
MYSTERIES
'SPECTRES OF THE SANCTUM'
AND THE
'£1.000 GHOST.'


MASKELYNE
AND
COOKE
EGYPTIAN HALL
ENGLAND'S
HOME
OF
MYSTERY
ILLUSORY
AND
ANTI-SPIRITUAL
ENTERTAINMENT.
Manager W. MORTON.
TUESDAY, THURSDAY & SATURDAY AFTERNOONS AT 3
EVERY EVENING AT 8 O'CLOCK
ORIGINAL & UNIQUE PERFORMANCE

LEFT: **ca. 1878** This program from Maskelyne and Cooke's Egyptian Hall, in London, offers "Anti-Spiritual Entertainment." Maskelyne was proud to explain that he accomplished his feats by pure trickery, even if he wouldn't divulge his actual secrets. His two famous mechanical automata, Psycho (the cardplayer) and Zoe (the artist), are illustrated on the program.



A MESSAGE FROM THE DEAD
THE IDOLS OF TWO CONTINENTS
MATERIALIZATION
EVENING IN SPIRITLAND
WITH
THORN & DARVIN
THE
WORLD'S FAMOUS
ROYAL ILLUSIONISTS
LEVITATION

THORN & DARVIN,
IN THEIR WONDERFUL
Illusionary and Modern Anti-Spiritualistic Entertainment.

THE RISE & FALL OF WITCHCRAFT & DEMONOLOGY,
Or, A GLANCE AT THE MYSTERIES OF OCCULT SCIENCE.

MYSTIC INFLUENCES OF PAST AGES,
REPRODUCED IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.

SUCCESSFUL EVERYWHERE!

THE MOST WONDERFUL ENTERTAINMENT IN EXISTENCE!

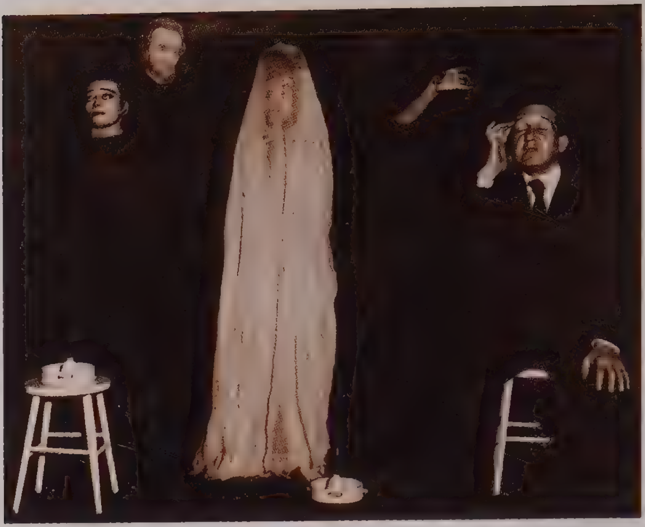
THEIR PERFORMANCES HAVE BEEN WITNESSED BY OVER THREE MILLIONS OF PEOPLE DURING THEIR TRIP AROUND THE WORLD. SECURE YOUR SEATS EARLY AT THE USUAL PRICE AND PLACE, AND AVOID THE RUSH. BABIES IN ARMS, $50.00.

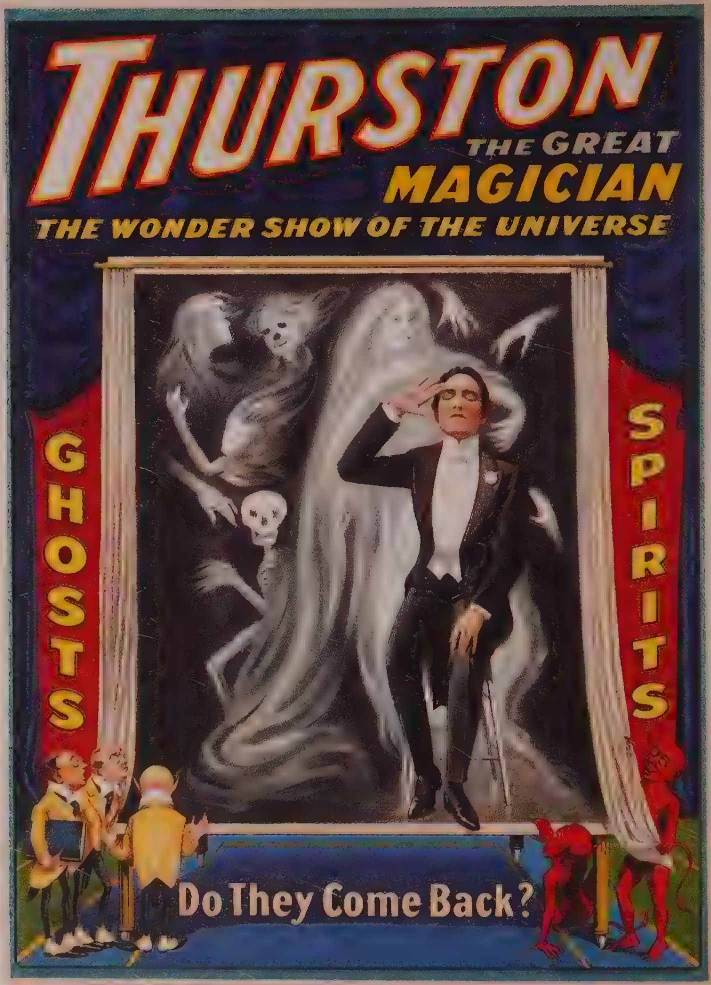
HARRY M. CLARK, - - - - - - - Business Agent.

OPPOSITE: **ca. 1888** A later performer at the Theatre Robert-Houdin in Paris, Harmington presented the popular Robert-Houdin effects as well as the latest routines such as the Spirit Cabinet. Here Harmington, right, is tied securely to the chair alongside his assistant Marius. Behind them is the assortment of props used in the séance, including a wooden hand, a violin, and a tambourine.

ABOVE: **ca. 1880** Thorn and Darvin was the name of the brother act of Moses (Chevalier Ernest) Thorn and Heinrich Thorn. Early in their career they specialized in Spiritualist performances, and this billing suggests that they had mastered it all: producing materializations, levitating, answering questions posed to the spirits, and duplicating the feats of the Davenports.

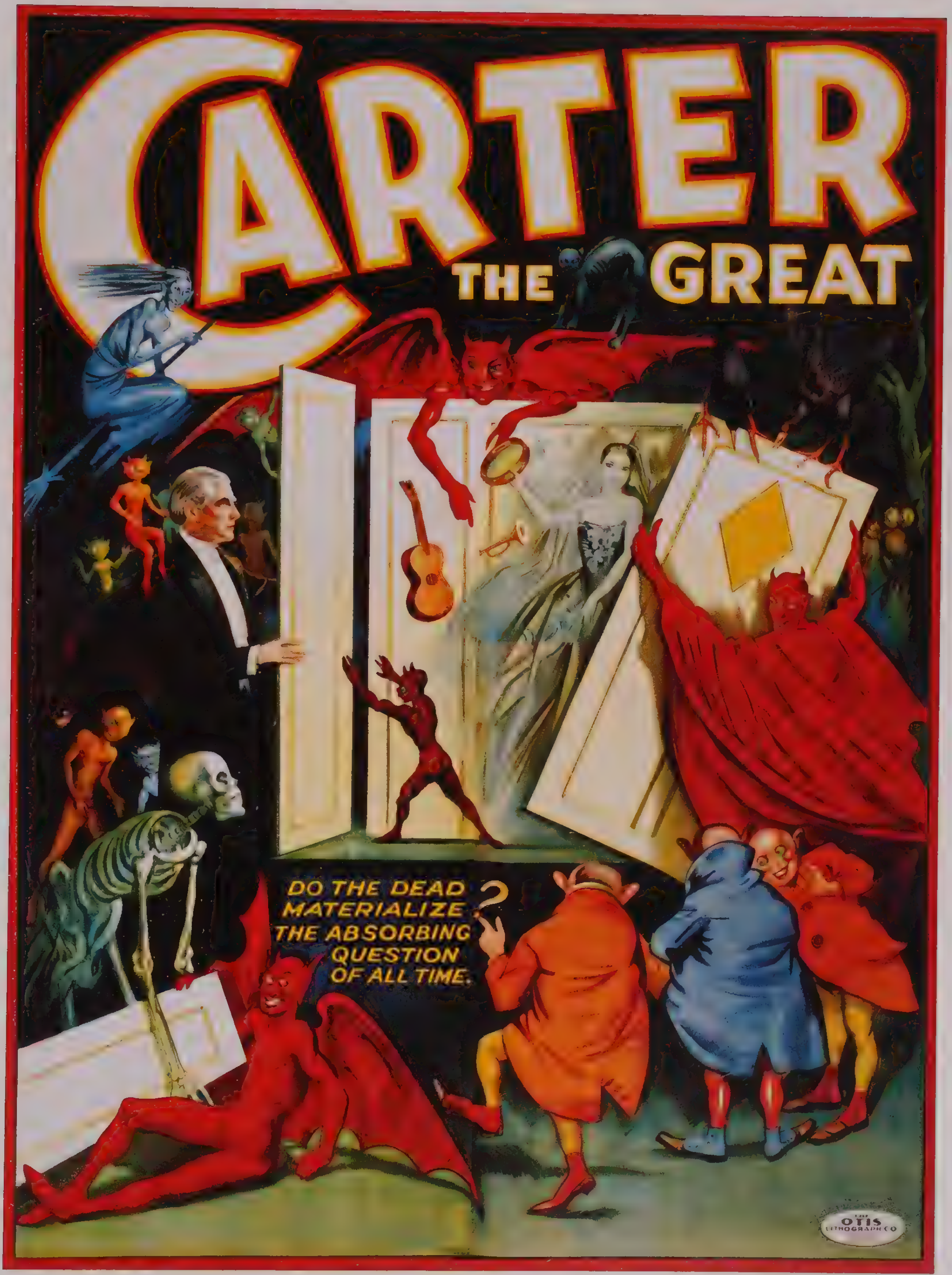
RIGHT: **ca. 1918** A posed photo shows spirits materializing behind the popular American magician Howard Thurston during his spirit cabinet act. Thurston called out for the spirit of Katie King, the ghost that was supposedly produced by the British medium Florence Cook in the 1870s, and gradually a gauzy ghost shape appeared behind him.

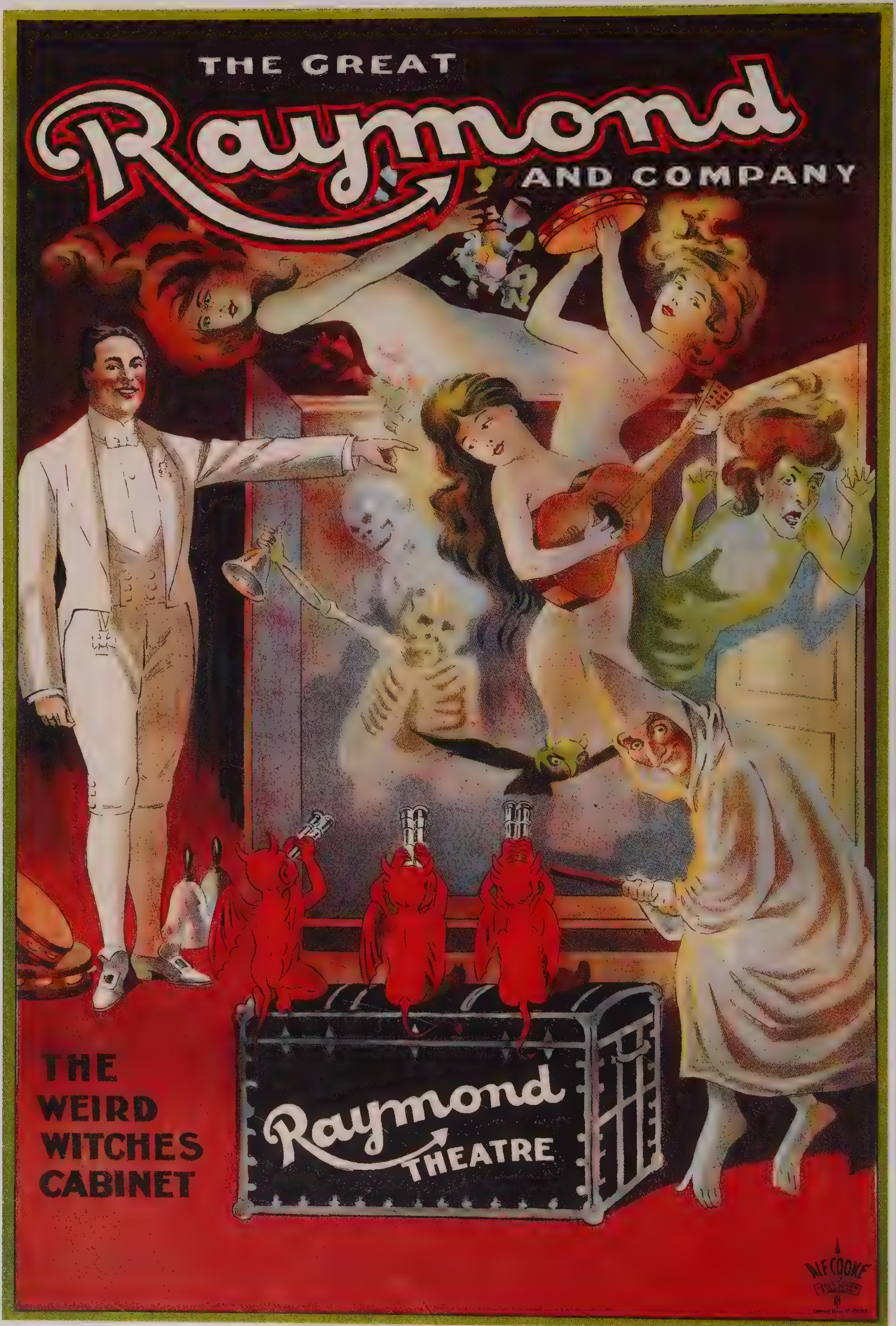




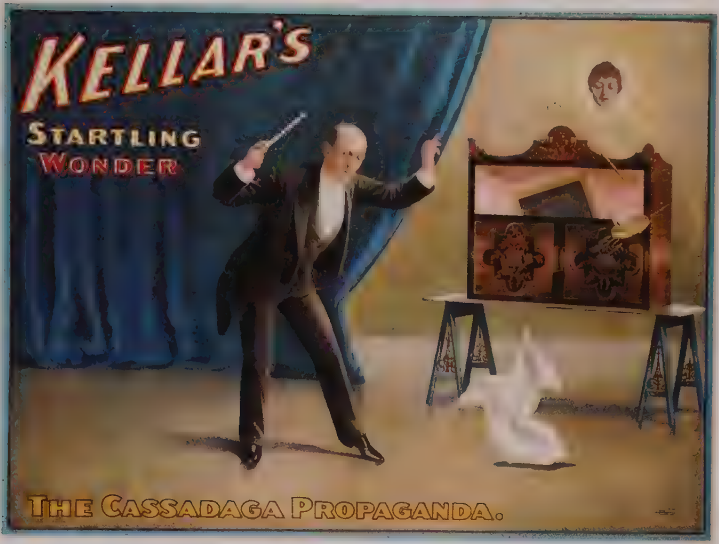
LEFT: **1916** For this poster, the poster artist has transformed Thurston's cast of ghosts into haunting, misty forms. In the 1920s, Thurston, always improving his show, quickened the pace of his spirit-cabinet routine. The ghost seemed to materialize as a large golden sphere, which floated out of the cabinet and across the stage.

OPPOSITE: **1926** Charles Carter, the American magician, knew a good trick when he saw it, and he knew effective advertising. This enormous, colorful seven-by-nine-foot poster illustrates Carter's copy of Kellar's spirit cabinet—he borrowed Kellar's trick, its secret, and even the imaginary creatures that Kellar used to advertise it!

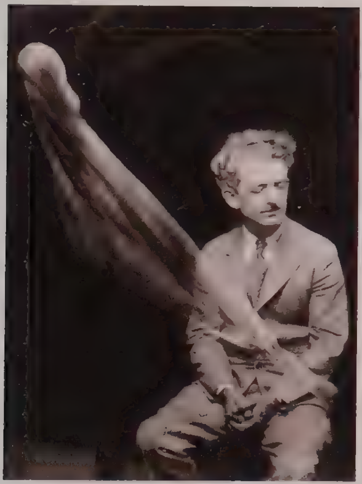

CARTER
THE GREAT
DO THE DEAD MATERIALIZE?
THE ABSORBING QUESTION OF ALL TIME.
THE OTIS LITHOGRAPH CO.


THE GREAT
Raymond
AND COMPANY
THE WEIRD WITCHES CABINET
Raymond
THEATRE
ALF COOKE

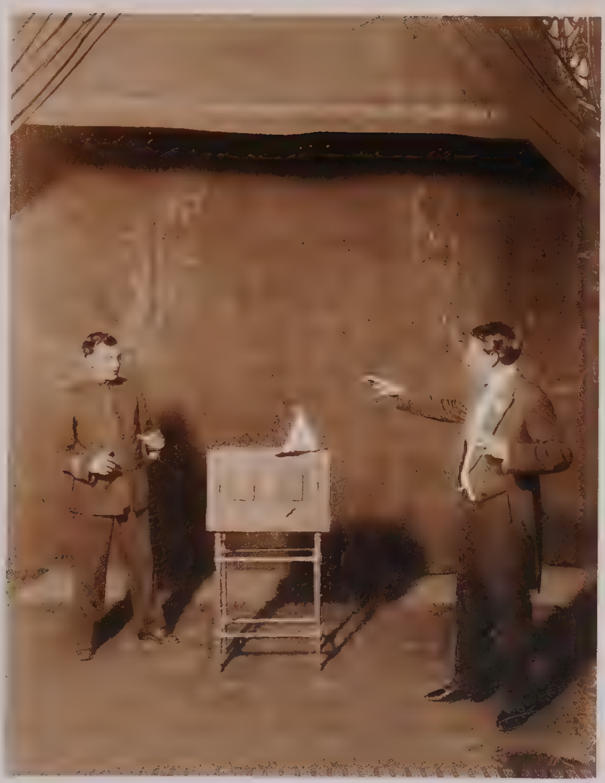
OPPOSITE: **ca. 1908** American Maurice Saunders (the Great Raymond) performed his elaborate, entertaining magic show over a long career. Following the Davenport formula, Raymond was seated and tied inside the curtained cabinet, but when the curtains were closed spirits apparently joined him inside. He later billed the routine as "Séance Mystique: A Trip to Spookville."



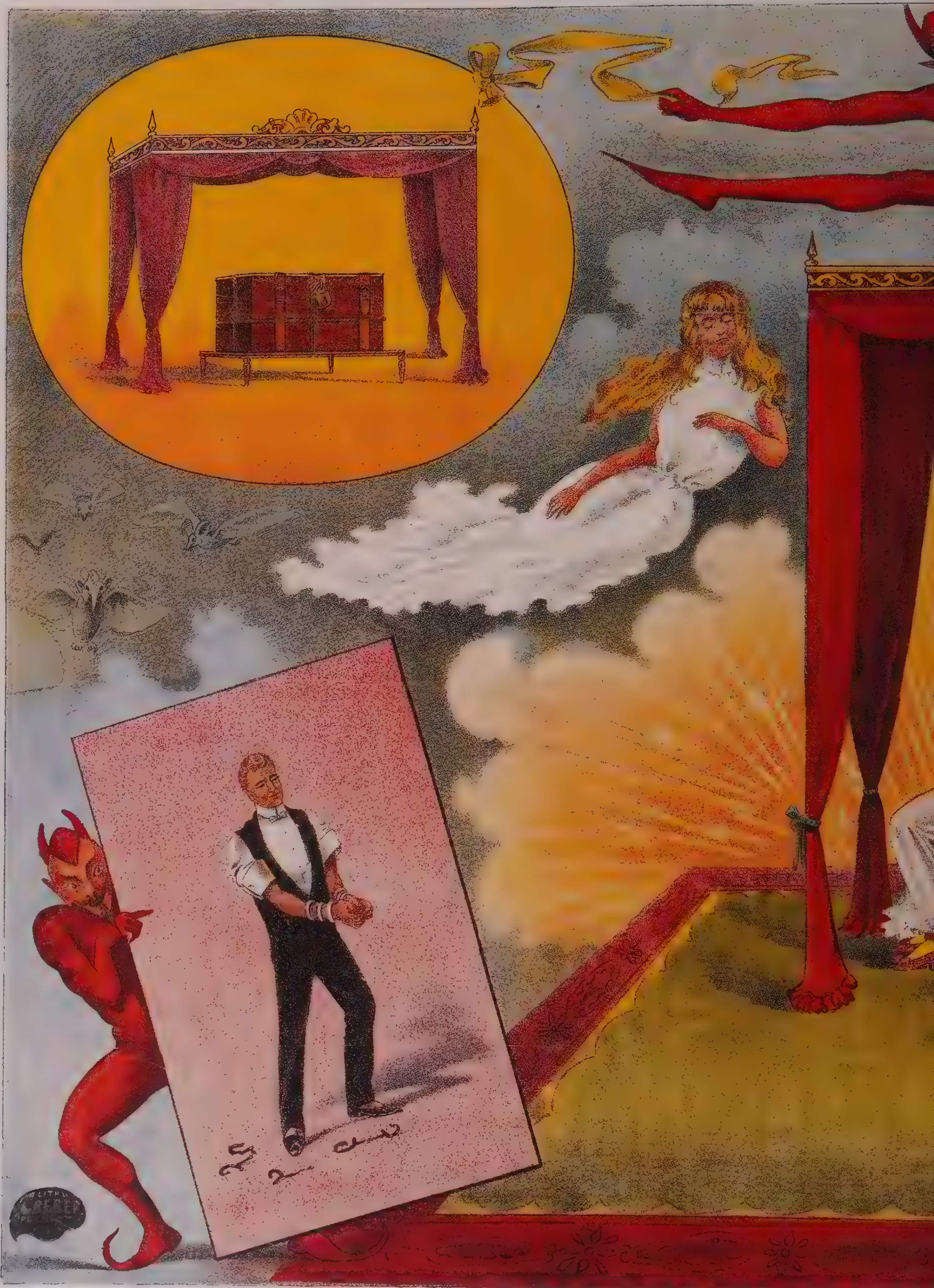
ABOVE: **1901** *Cassadaga Propaganda* refers to the famous Spiritualist camp in Cassadaga, New York. Kellar's tiny wooden cabinet became infested by ghosts, and one even inhabited a handkerchief, which danced out of the cabinet and across the stage.

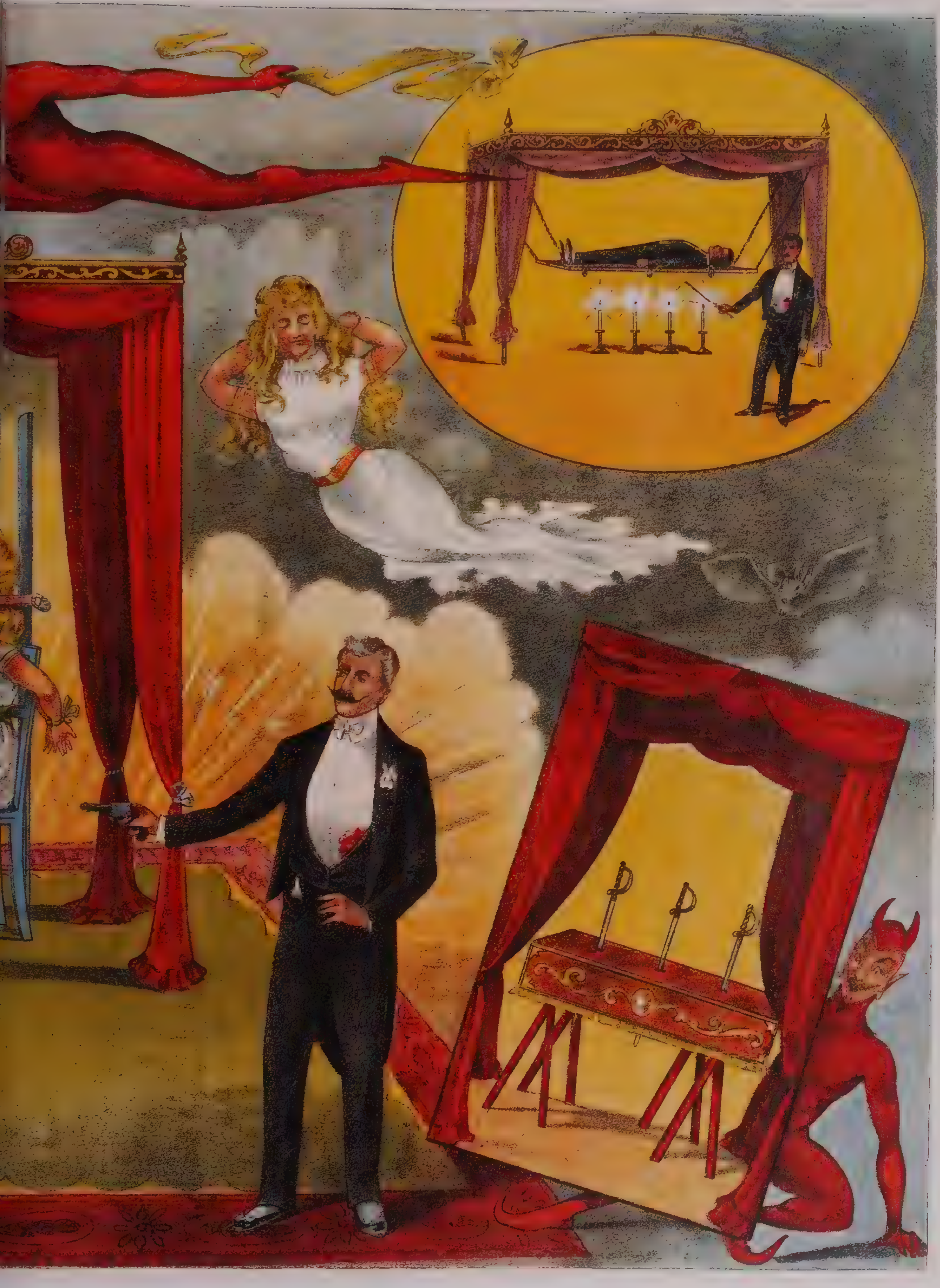


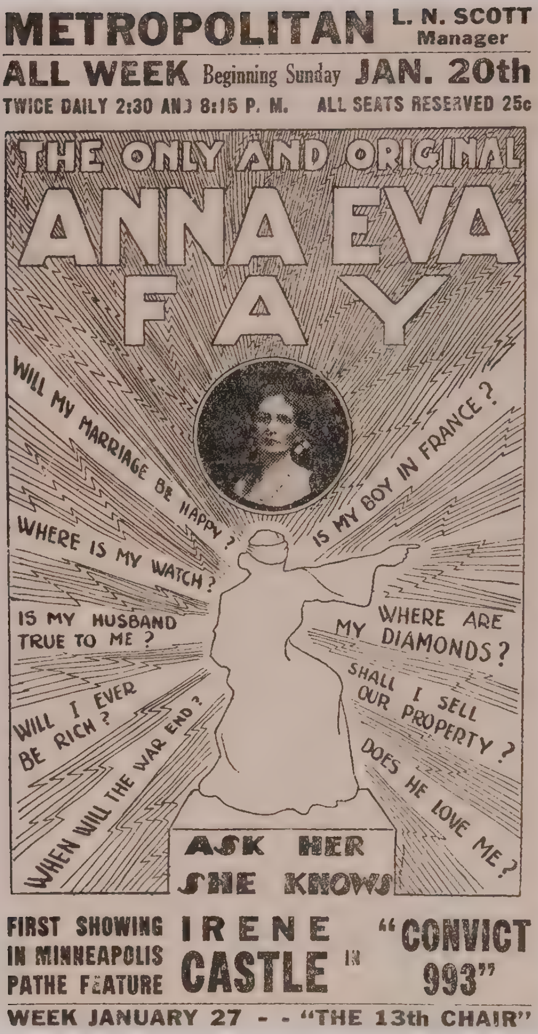
ABOVE: **1914** Harry Blackstone, born Harry Bouton in 1885, became one of America's greatest magicians. One of his specialties was the Dancing Handkerchief, copied from Kellar and Thurston. A borrowed white handkerchief seemed to become haunted, following Blackstone's commands. This unusual portrait shows him posing with a ghost.



RIGHT: **ca. 1910** Howard Thurston is shown performing the Dancing Handkerchief. A handkerchief was tied with a knot and placed into the small cabinet. It emerged from the cabinet, jumped to the stage, and began to shake and "dance." In Thurston's show, it was a novelty. Blackstone turned it into a memorable mystery.


LITHO
CALVERT





METROPOLITAN L. N. SCOTT Manager

ALL WEEK Beginning Sunday **JAN. 20th**

TWICE DAILY 2:30 AND 8:15 P. M. ALL SEATS RESERVED 25c

THE ONLY AND ORIGINAL

ANNA EVA FAY

WILL MY MARRIAGE BE HAPPY?

IS MY BOY IN FRANCE?

WHERE IS MY WATCH?

IS MY HUSBAND TRUE TO ME?

WHERE ARE MY DIAMONDS?

SHALL I SELL OUR PROPERTY?

WILL I EVER BE RICH?

WHEN WILL THE WAR END?

DOES HE LOVE ME?

ASK HER SHE KNOWS

FIRST SHOWING IN MINNEAPOLIS PATHE FEATURE **IRENE CASTLE** IN **"CONVICT 993"**

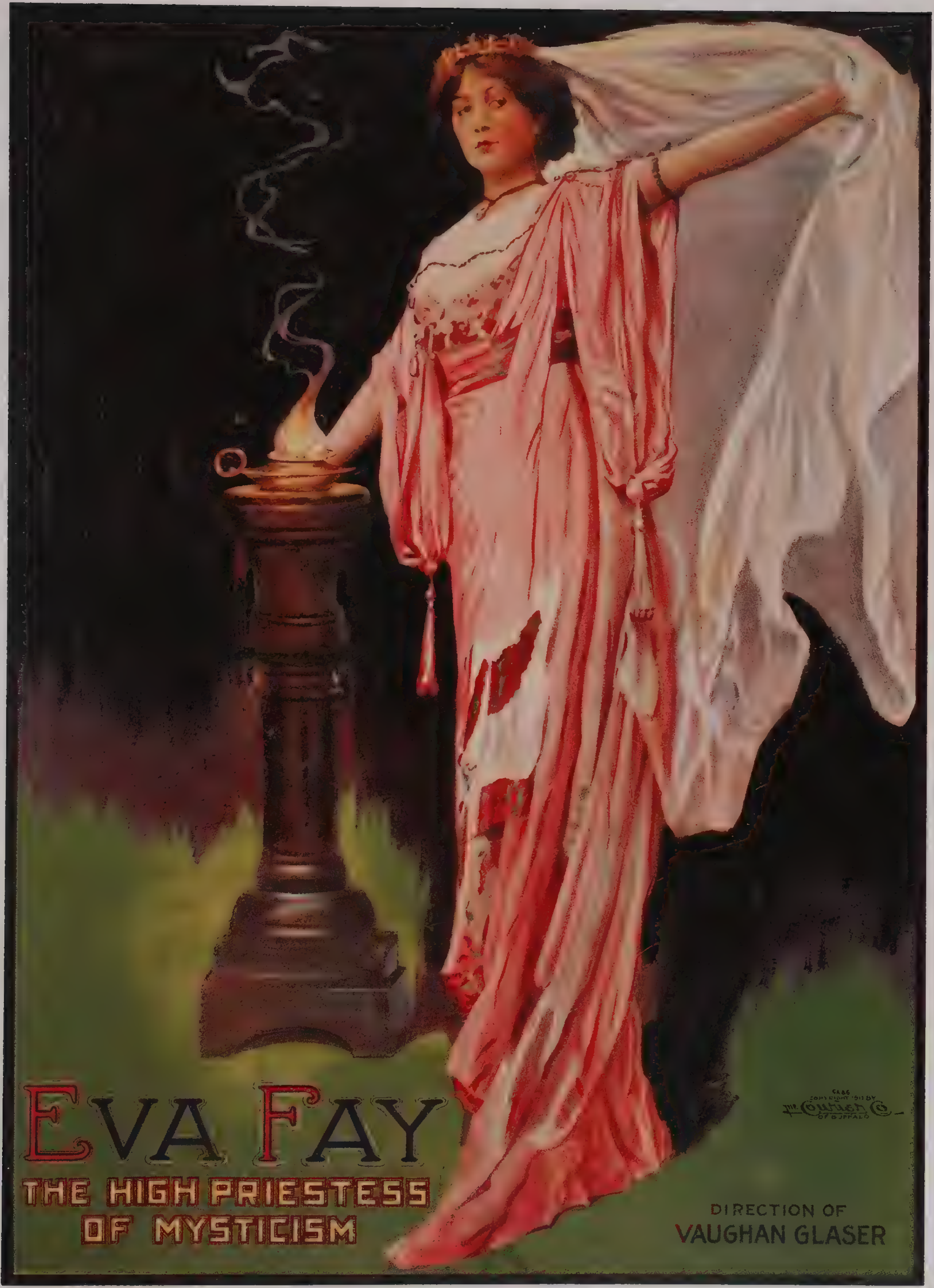
WEEK JANUARY 27 - - "THE 13th CHAIR"

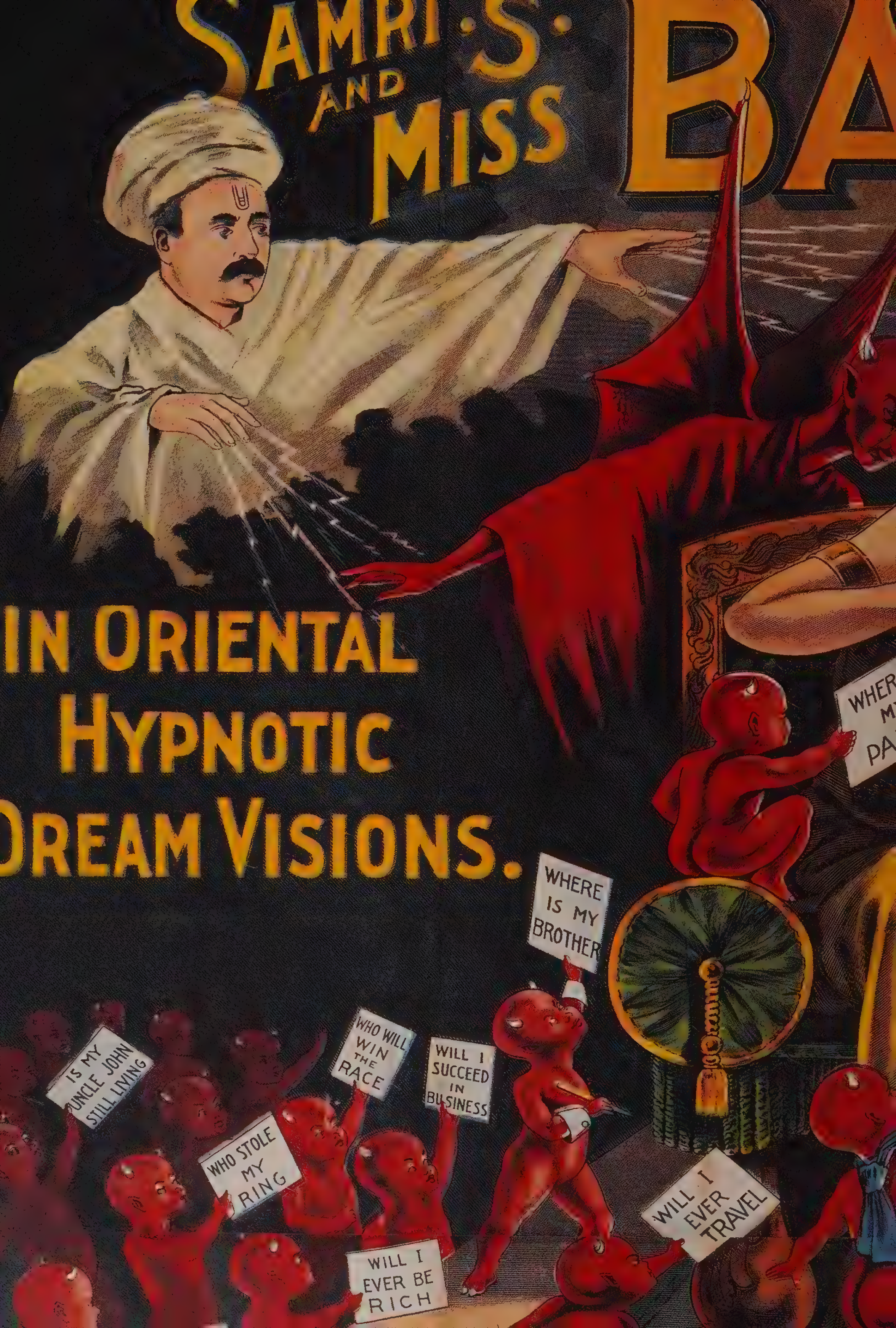
ABOVE: **1918** A newspaper advertisement for the famous Anna Eva Fay illustrates her vaudeville act. Supposedly possessing supernatural powers, she could answer questions or give advice to the audience. This advertisement features questions about "the war" and "my boy in France." World War I encouraged a resurgent interest in Spiritualism.

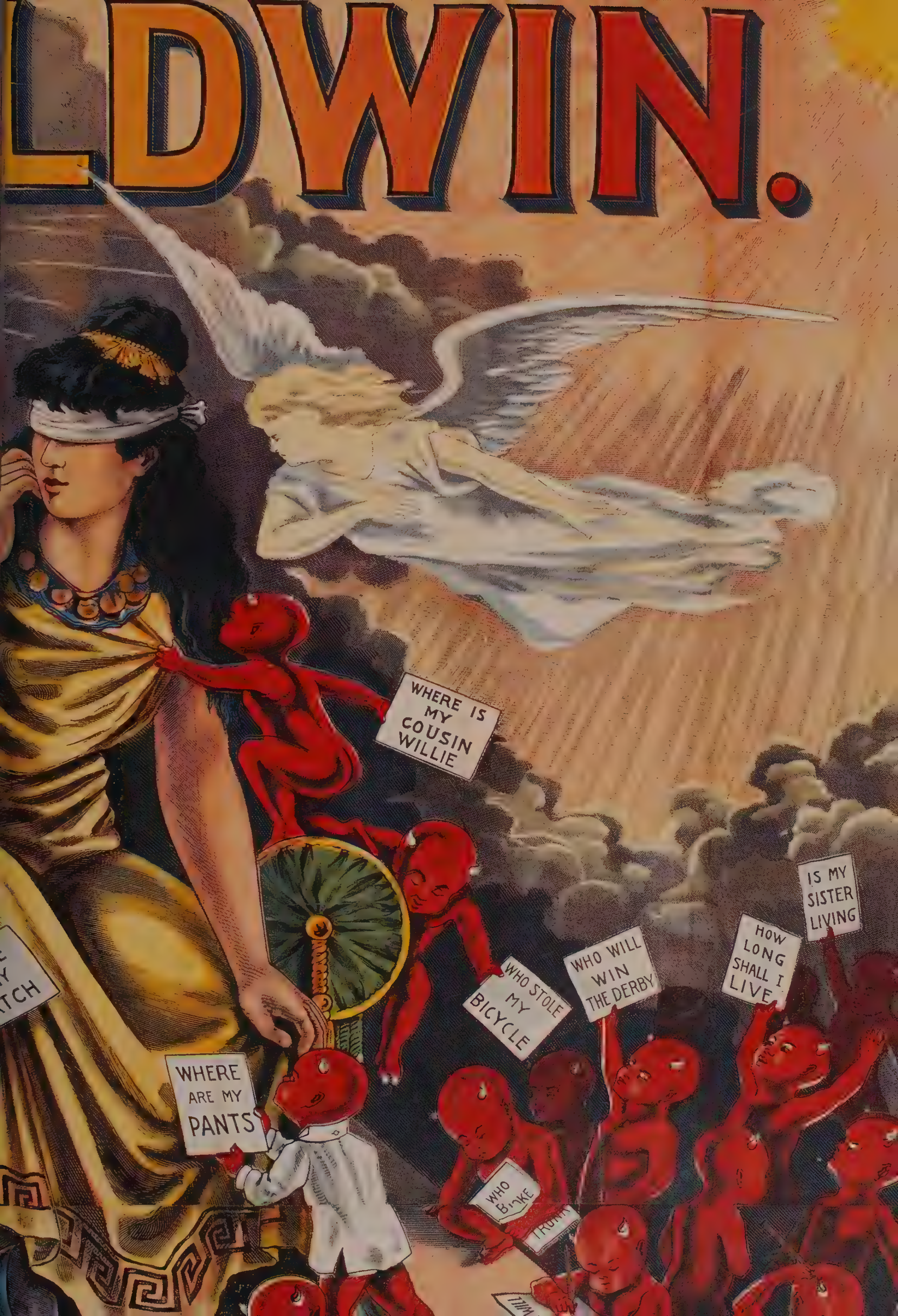
RIGHT: **1907** The demure Anna Eva Fay was tested in 1875 by British physicist Sir William Crookes, using his special invention. In the séance room, Anna held two metal handles. If she removed a hand, an electric circuit would be broken and an alarm would sound. The séance was a success, and Crookes pronounced her genuine. Years later she revealed her secret to Houdini: she had quickly looped her bare knee over one handle, leaving one hand free for the séance.

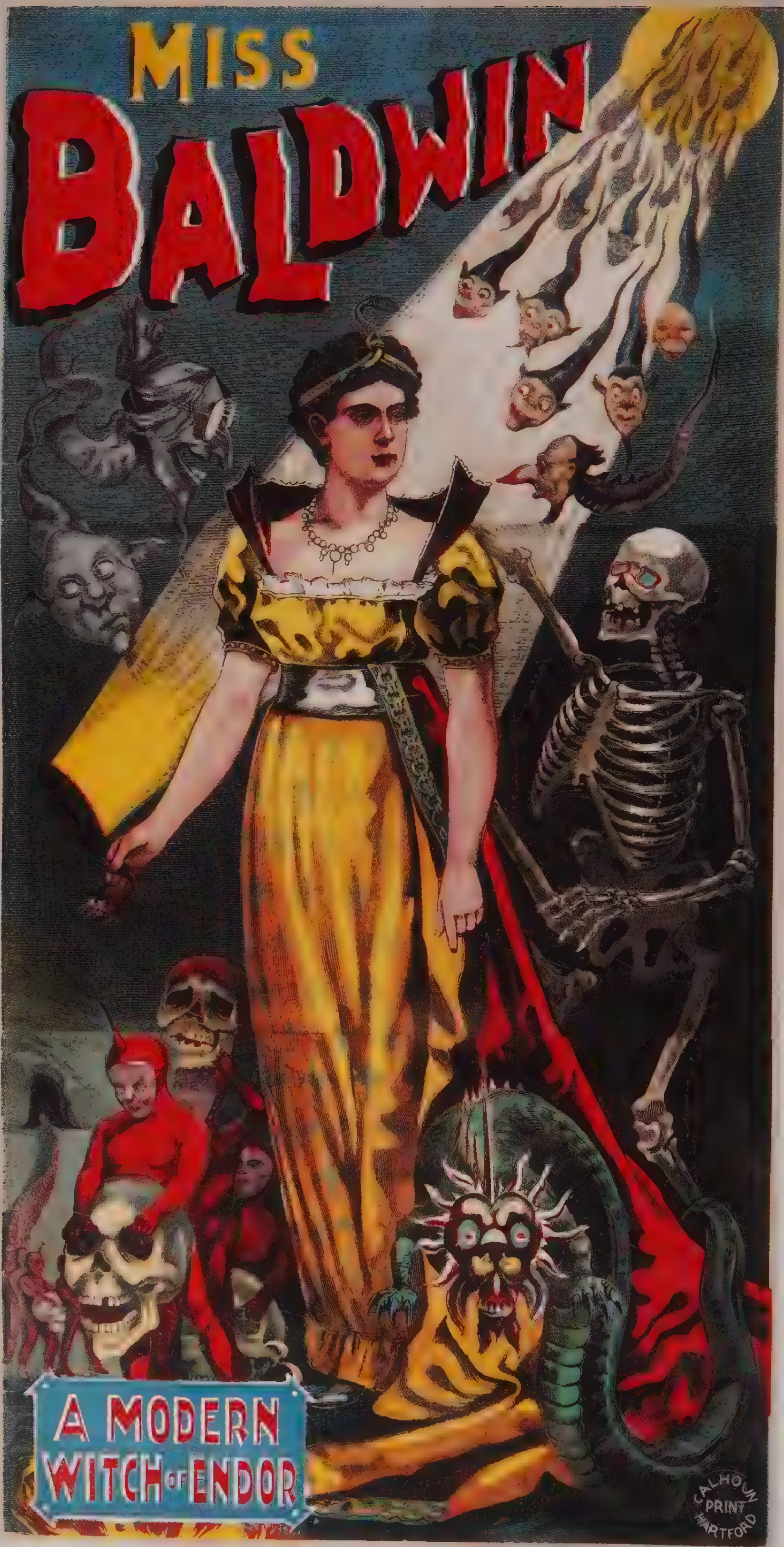
ABOVE AND OPPOSITE: **ca. 1918 and 1911** This elegant vaudeville star is Eva Fay, born Eva Norman, Anna Eva Fay's daughter-in-law. She took her mother-in-law's name and act to capitalize on the family success. But Eva Fay, who performed in vaudeville answering questions with supposedly psychic powers, achieved only a fraction of Anna's success.

PAGES 230–231: **ca. 1905** A British stock poster for a magic act shows the typical feats expected by an audience, including handcuff and trunk escapes. The prominent image is of a woman tied to a post; she is about to begin a spirit séance. Two spirits hover overhead, ready to assist.


EVA FAY
THE HIGH PRIESTESS OF MYSTICISM
The Courier Co.
OF BUFFALO
DIRECTION OF
VAUGHAN GLASER

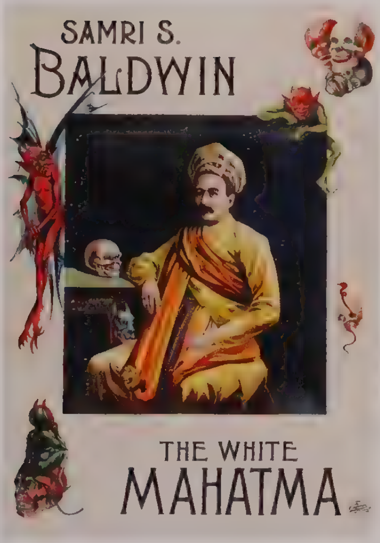

SAMRI·S·
AND
MISS
BA
IN ORIENTAL
HYPNOTIC
DREAM VISIONS.
WHER
M
PA
WHERE IS MY BROTHER
IS MY UNCLE JOHN STILL LIVING
WHO WILL WIN THE RACE
WILL I SUCCEED IN BUSINESS
WHO STOLE MY RING
WILL I EVER TRAVEL
WILL I EVER BE RICH


LDWIN.
WHERE IS MY COUSIN WILLIE
E
Y
TCH
WHERE ARE MY PANTS
WHO STOLE MY BICYCLE
WHO WILL WIN THE DERBY
HOW LONG SHALL I LIVE
IS MY SISTER LIVING
WHO BROKE
TRUN

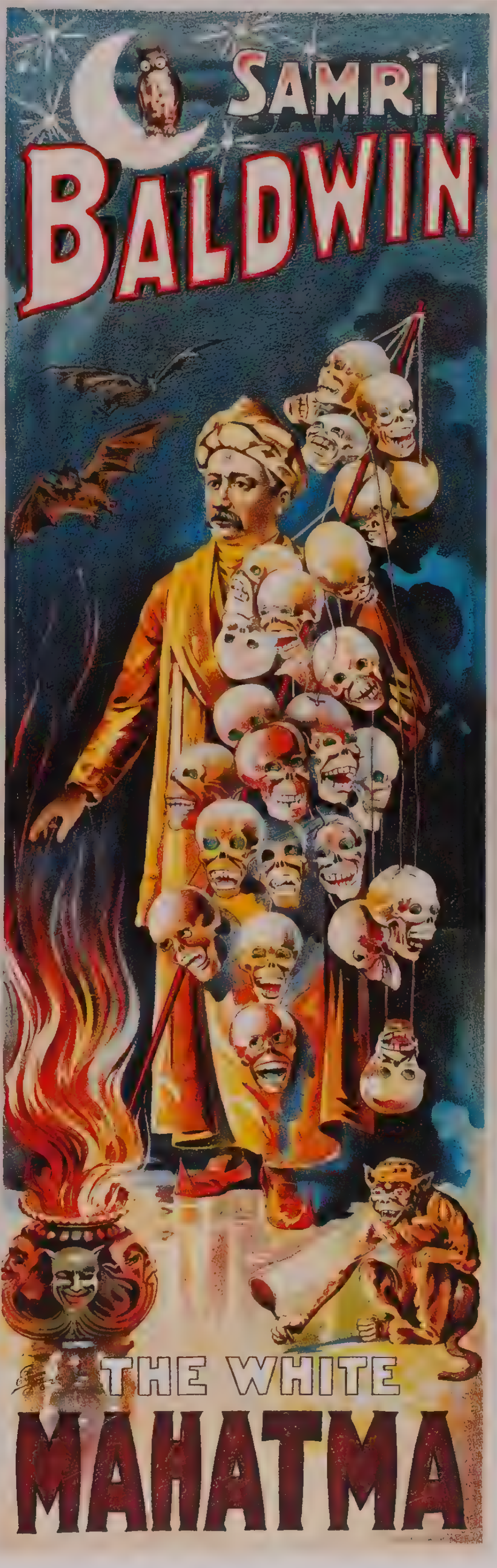

MISS
BALDWIN
A MODERN
WITCH OF ENDOR
CALHOUN
PRINT
HARTFORD

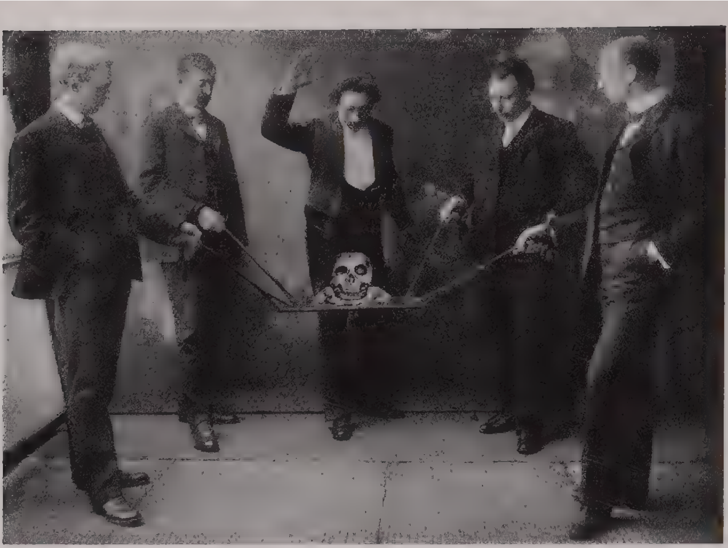
PAGES 234–235: **ca. 1890** This colorful seven-by-nine-foot wood-block poster advertises Samri S. and Miss Kittie Baldwin's innovative question-and-answer act. Audience members wrote their questions and sealed them in envelopes. Kittie Baldwin, blindfolded, would pick up an envelope, apparently divine the question, and provide a comforting "psychic" answer. The act was copied by hundreds of performers.

OPPOSITE: **ca. 1890** Kittie Baldwin was portrayed as an oracle, a "Modern Witch of Endor," from the Old Testament account of a witch who could summon spirits. Here Baldwin is surrounded by a pastiche of mystic and horrific images, evidence of her control of the underworld. Although most theatrical posters at this time were produced with lithography, these Baldwin posters were meticulously printed from wood-block carvings, creating distinctive, sharp images.



ABOVE AND RIGHT: **ca. 1890** Samri S. Baldwin was born in Ohio, trained in theology, and inspired to become a performer when he saw the Davenport Brothers perform their séance. Samri and Kittie Baldwin, billed as the White Mahatmas, had long careers performing magic that gave the impression of psychic wonders. This portrait, right, shows Baldwin carrying a collection of skulls—an unsettling image tying him to primitive cultures. The silk turban and robe, also shown in the portrait above, are suggestions of exotic Eastern mysticism.

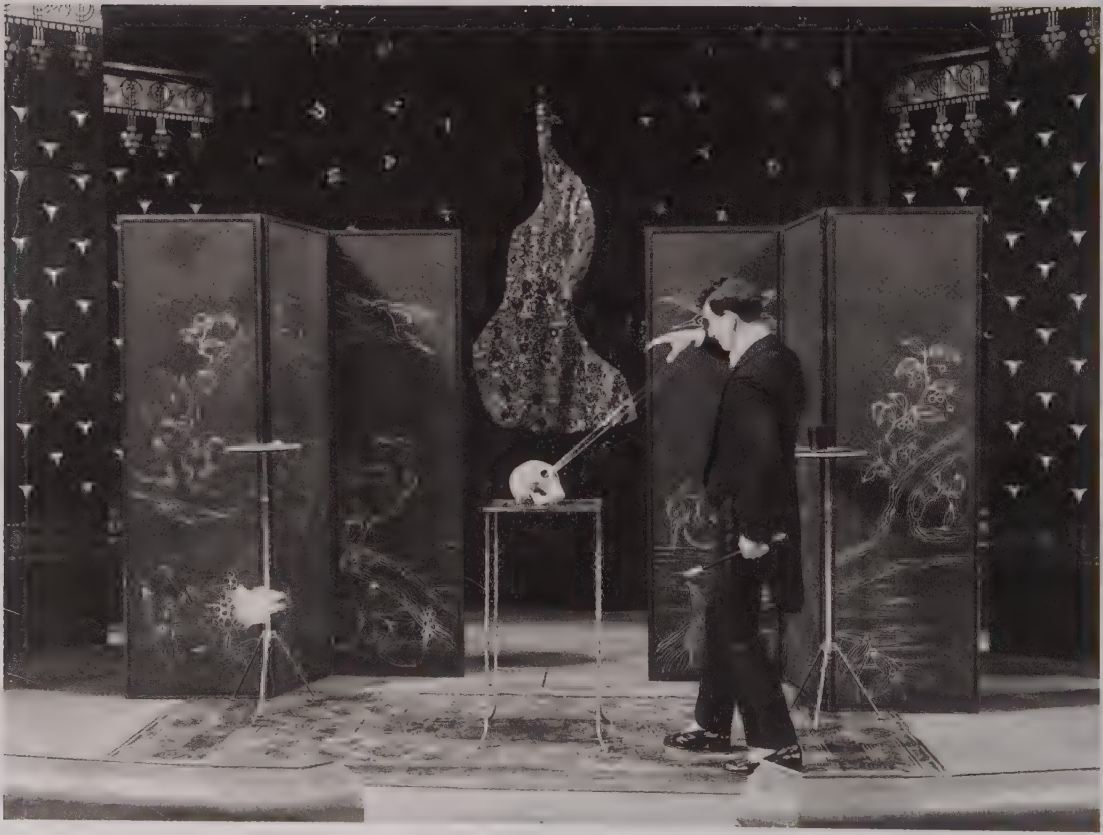


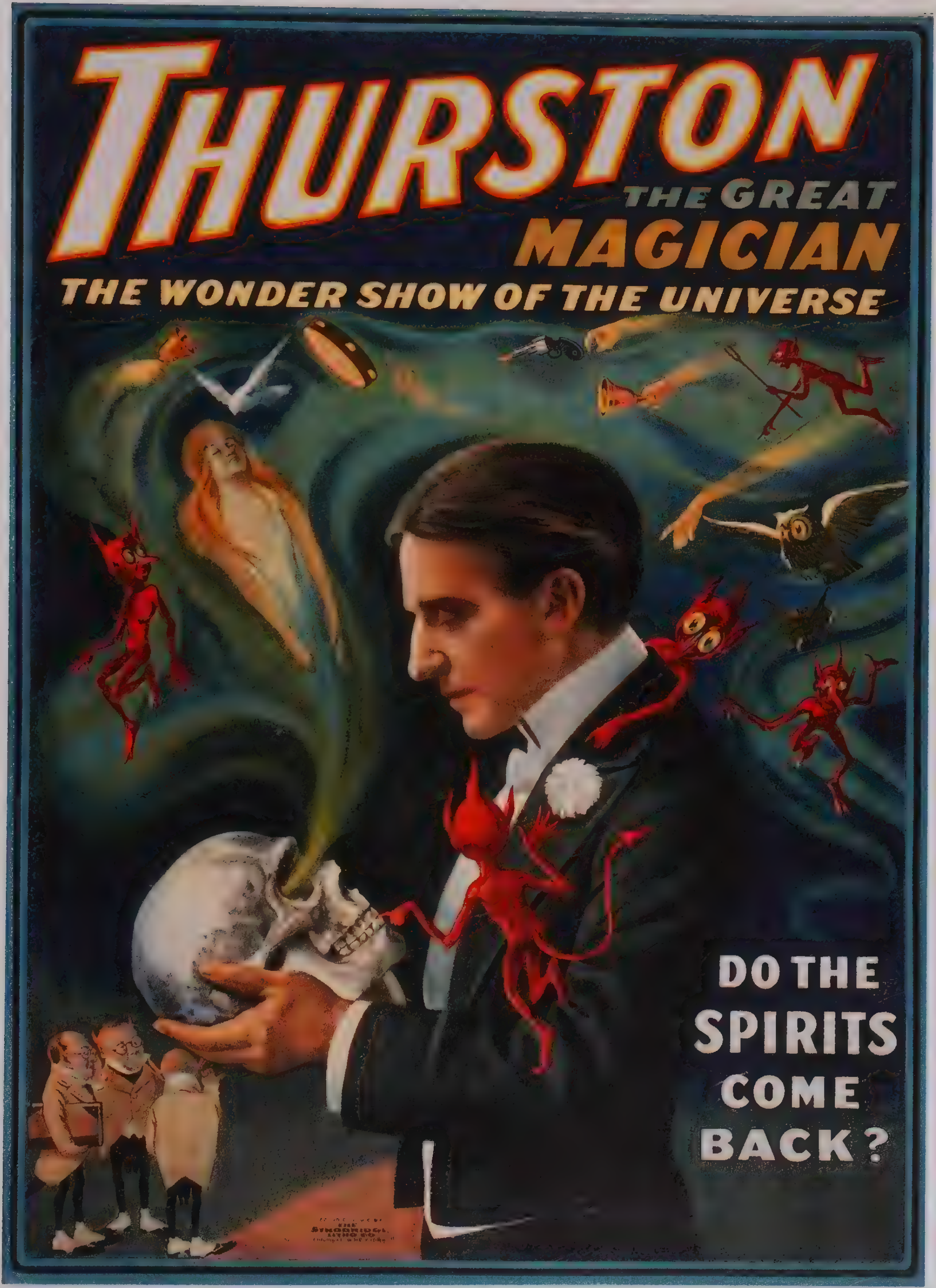


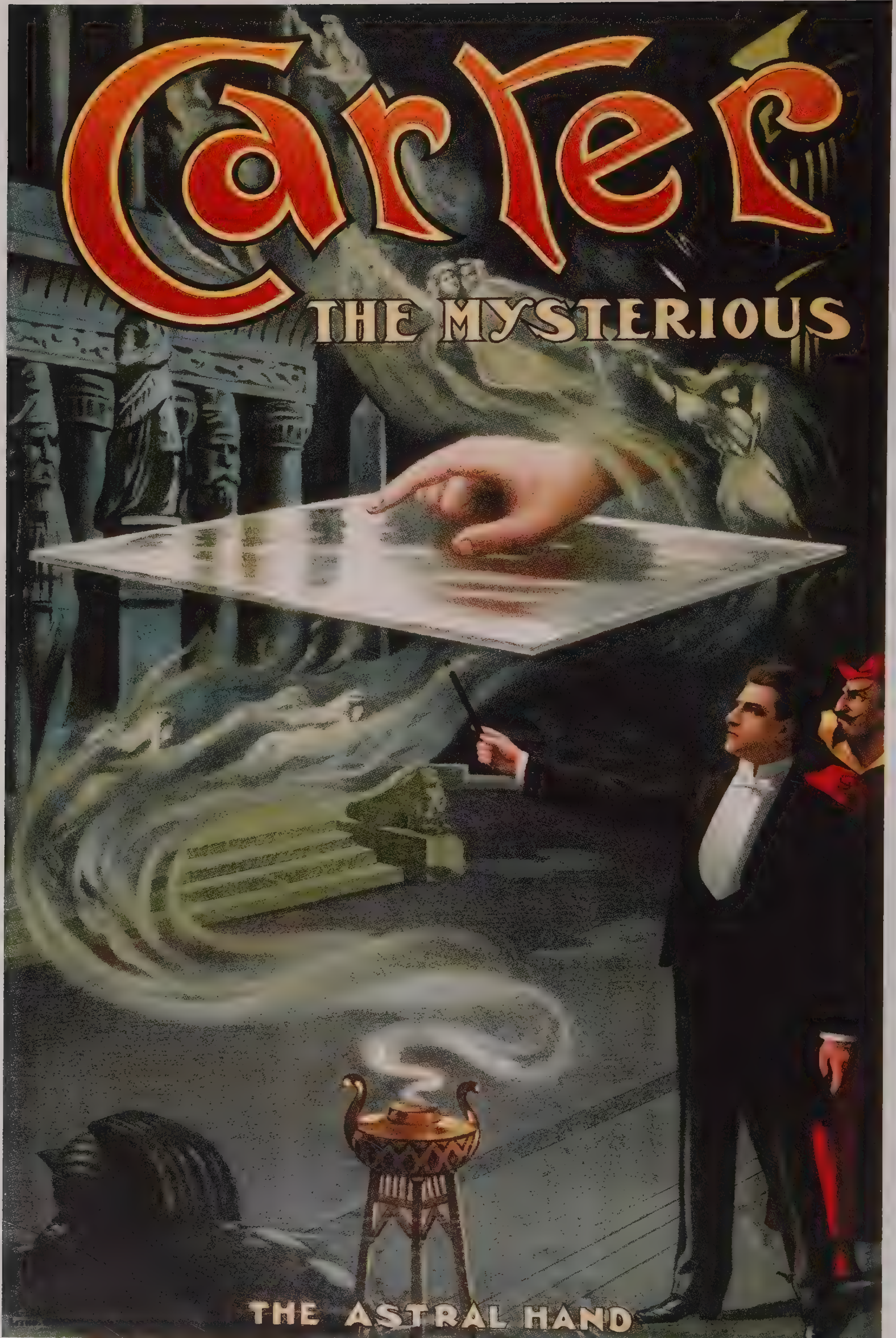
OPPOSITE: **1915** Howard Thurston did not actually appear with a skull during his performances, but the artist of this elegant poster realized that the image of Thurston contemplating death—combined with the question "Do the Spirits Come Back?"—captures the essence of the spirit séance and is the perfect advertisement for his show.

LEFT: **1908** The Chicago magician Joseffy was born Joseph Freud in Vienna, Austria. His version of the Talking Skull was an artistic masterpiece. Joseffy claimed he used the skull of the famous 18th-century occultist and alchemist Giuseppe Balsamo (Count of Cagliostro). When asked questions, the skull would open and shut its jaw with a loud click—as Joseffy explained, "twice for no, three times for yes."

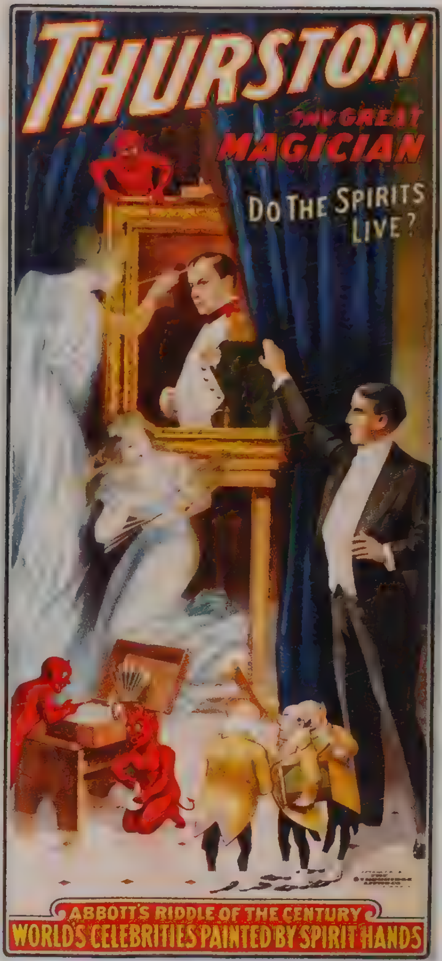
BELOW: **ca. 1920** In the middle of his elegant, modern stage setting, German magician Alois Kassner performs the Talking Skull. The skull is on a sheet of glass, isolated from any connections. The rays of light from the skull's eyes were drawn onto the photograph, an artist's exaggeration.



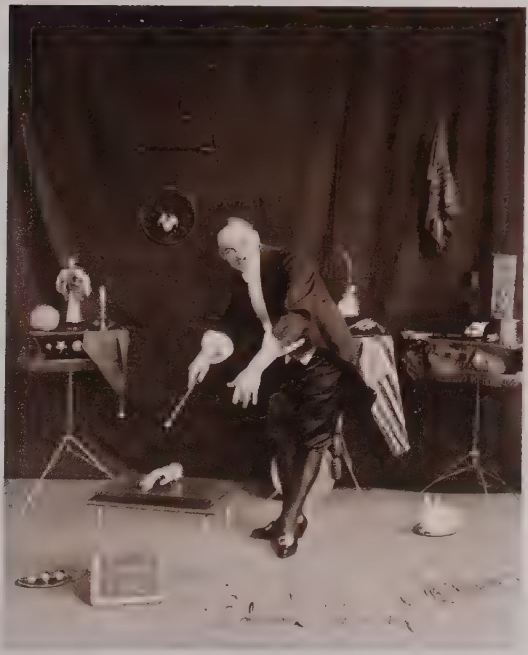

THURSTON
THE GREAT
MAGICIAN
THE WONDER SHOW OF THE UNIVERSE
DO THE
SPIRITS
COME
BACK?


Carter
THE MYSTERIOUS
THE ASTRAL HAND

ABOVE: **ca. 1910** The inventive British illusionist P. T. Selbit produced Spirit Paintings on the vaudeville stage. These unusual works of art, which seemed to paint themselves as the audience watched, had first been demonstrated several years earlier in the séances of two Chicago mediums, the Bangs Sisters. The Bangs Sisters' secret was discerned by magicians and investigators, and later used by Selbit in his vaudeville act.

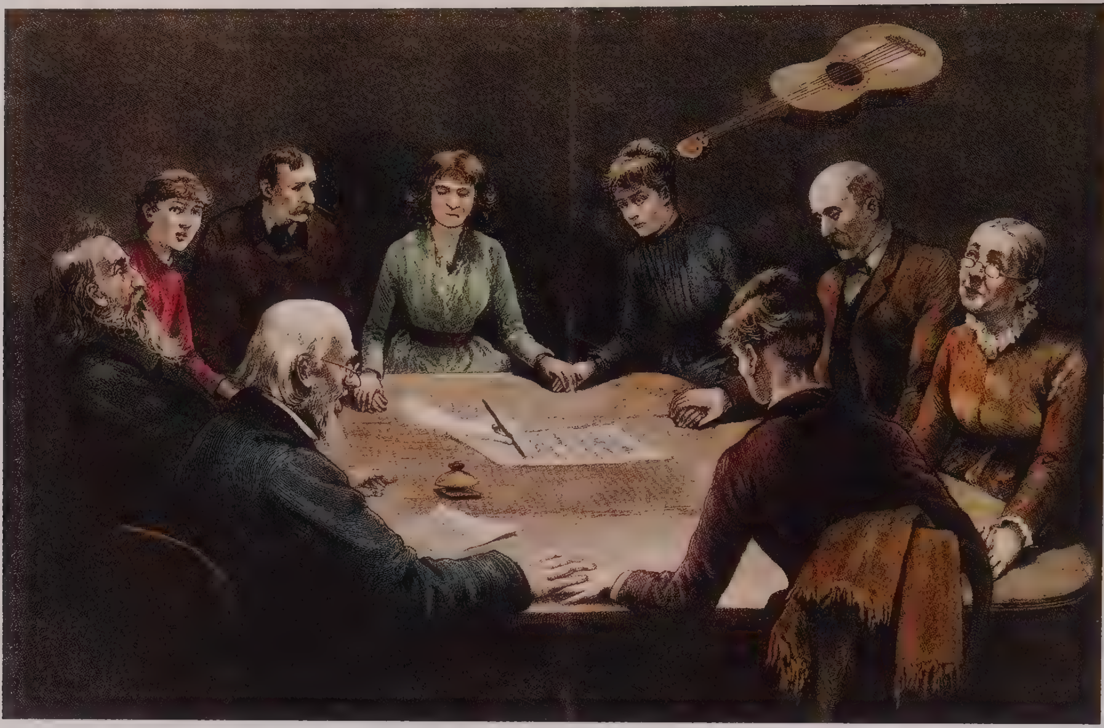

THURSTON
THE GREAT MAGICIAN
DO THE SPIRITS LIVE?
ABBOTT'S RIDDLE OF THE CENTURY
WORLD'S CELEBRITIES PAINTED BY SPIRIT HANDS

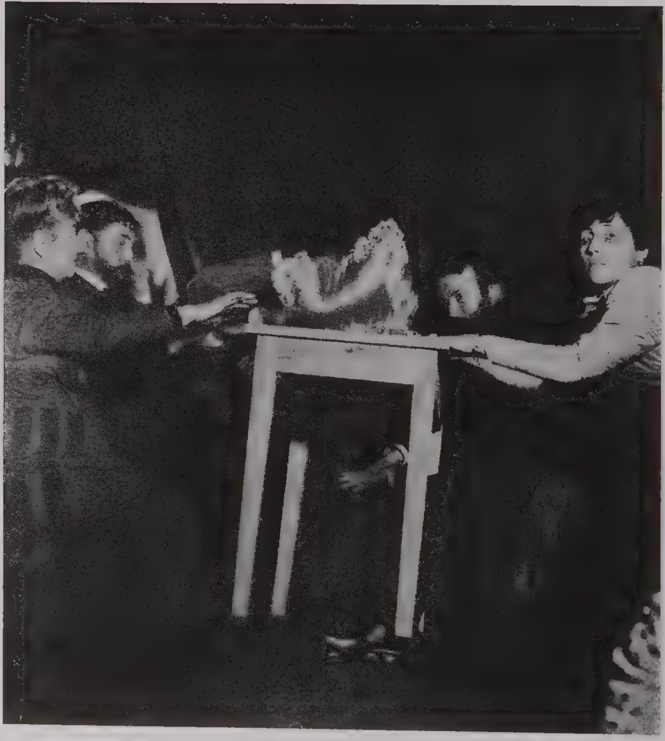
ABOVE RIGHT: **1911** Thurston brought the Spirit Paintings to his show following Selbit's success with the illusion. The audience was shown a number of blank canvases. A spectator in the audience would then suggest the name of a famous person, and then a portrait of that person gradually appeared on a blank canvas, as if painted by ghosts.



LEFT: **ca. 1915** Edwin Brush, a Chautauqua magician who performed in touring tent shows, featured the popular spirit tricks of the day, including messages appearing on a blank slate and the Spirit Rapping Hand. This carved wooden hand, examined by the audience and then isolated on a board, would tap out answers to spectators' questions.

OPPOSITE: **1905** Charles Carter's Astral Hand was an elaborate presentation of the Spirit Rapping Hand trick. "You are at liberty to infer whatever you please after having seen the deception," he would tell his audience. "Designate it as Spiritualism, or hypnotism, mesmerism, magnetism, mechanism, or rheumatism."



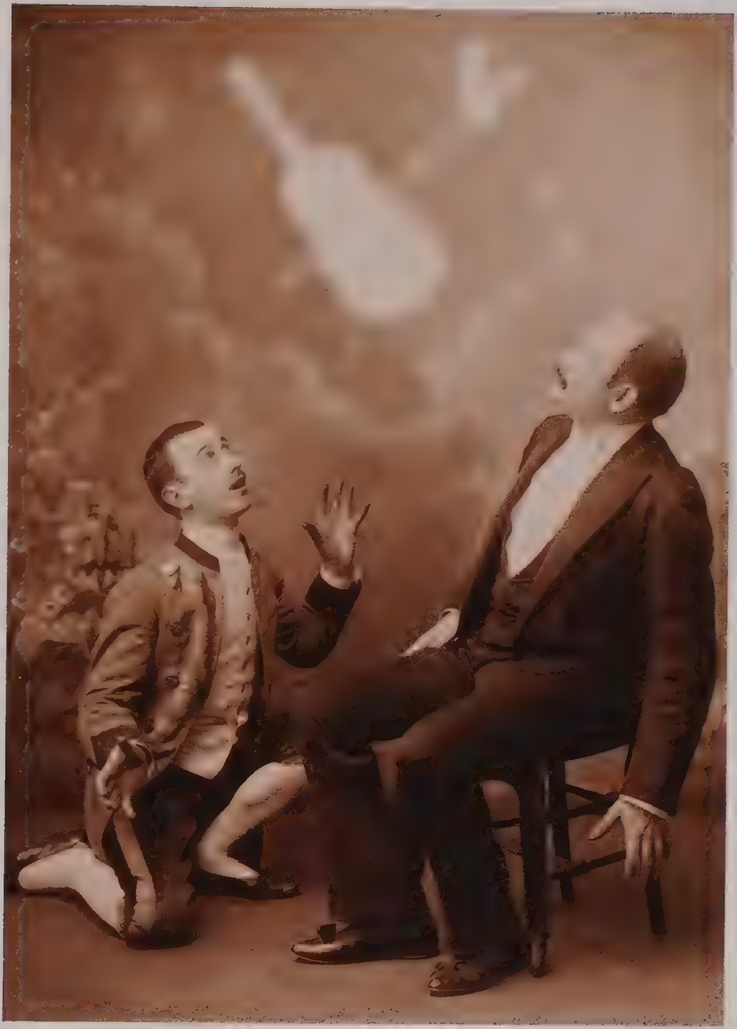


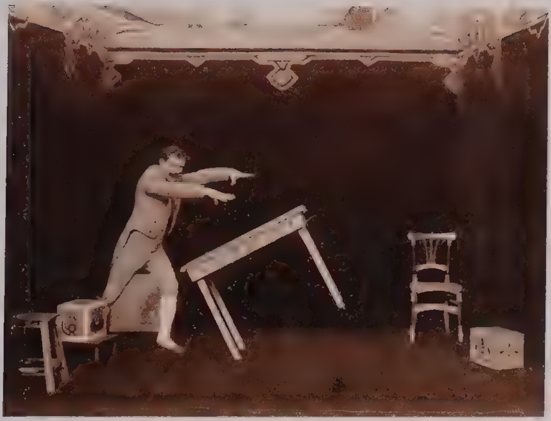
ABOVE: 1887 A hand-tinted engraving shows a typical American séance during the Victorian era. Hands were linked around the table, making a psychic connection and ensuring against trickery. Then the lights were extinguished and the spectators waited hopefully for a sign from the spirits.

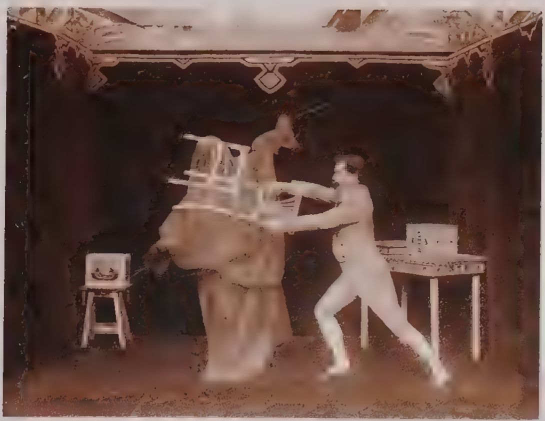
RIGHT: 1898 Eusapia Palladino was a temperamental Neapolitan medium who amazed researchers in France and America with her séance phenomena. Her specialty was causing a small table to float in the air. Even magician Howard Thurston was convinced that she did not use trickery.

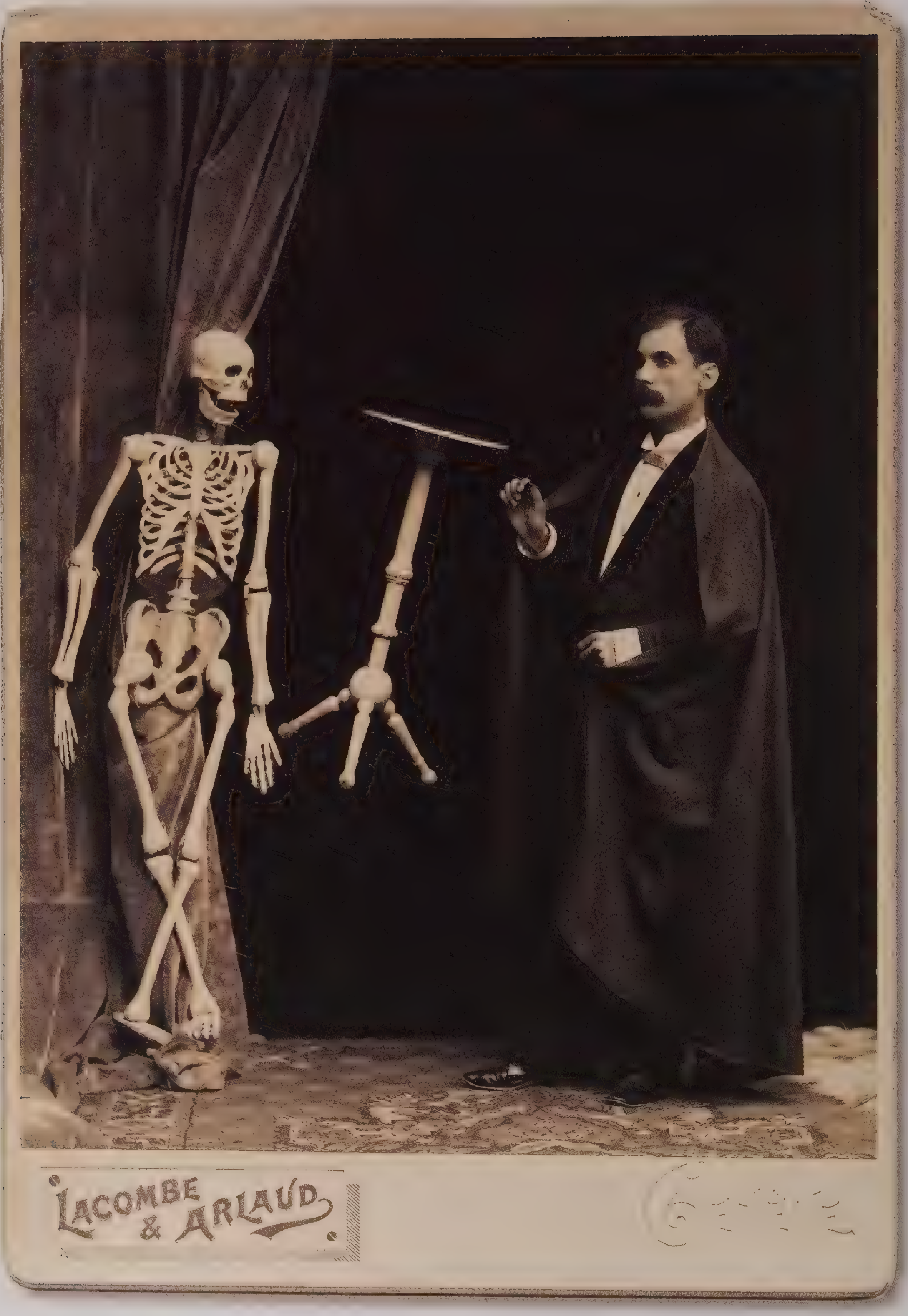
RIGHT: **ca. 1890** Harmington was a popular magician who managed the famous Theatre Robert-Houdin in Paris. Here he appears with his assistant Marius. The publicity photo used a double-exposed image to suggest his Spiritualistic tricks: a ghostly hand appears to play music on a ghostly fiddle.

BELOW: **ca. 1909** Jules-Eugène Legris appeared at the Theatre Robert-Houdin with Georges Méliès, the French magician and film pioneer. These photographs dramatize his spiritual effects. In the first photo, he produces a magical version of a floating and tipping table. The second picture is a double exposure, or spirit photo, purely for publicity.





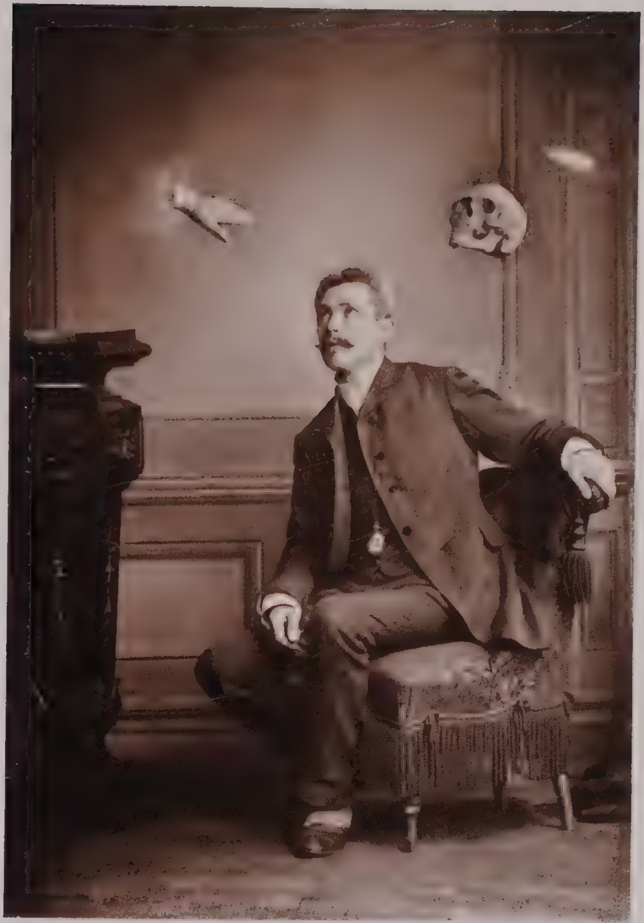


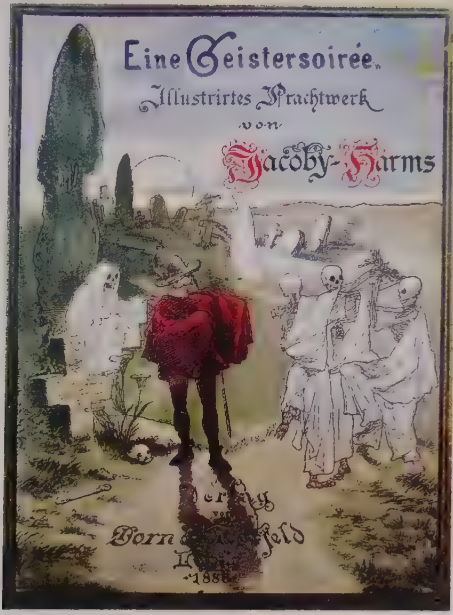

LACOMBE & ARLAUD

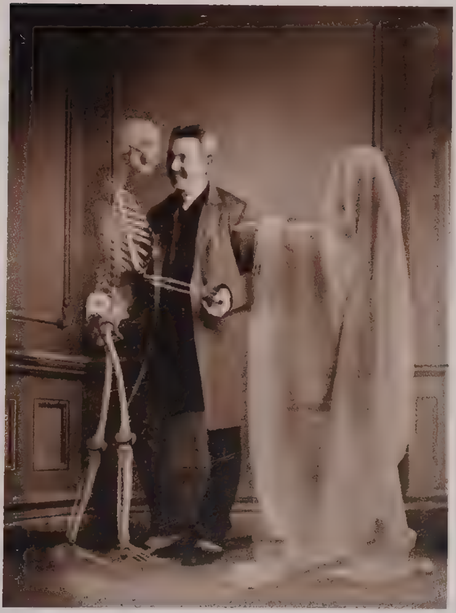
OPPOSITE: **ca. 1895** Gaston Velle was a second-generation magician who performed at the Theatre Robert-Houdin and later became the director of trick cinema for Pathé Films in France. At Pathé, Velle was responsible for creating Méliès-inspired fantasies and special effects, translating magic to celluloid.

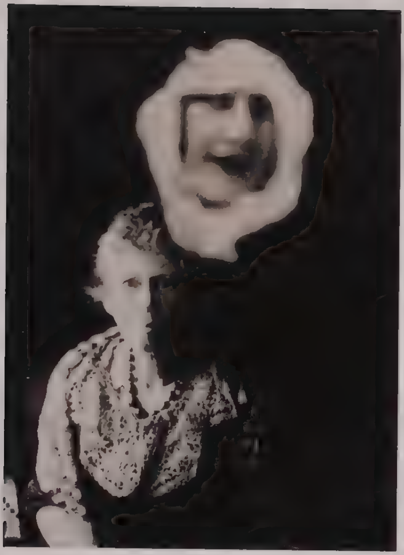
RIGHT AND BOTTOM LEFT: **1886** The German magician Professor Jacoby-Harms wrote a book of poetry, *A Spirit Soiree*, below, with his verses accompanied by a series of striking spirit photographs taken by F. A. Dahlstrom. Here the magician is haunted by the props from his show, including the carved wooden Spirit Rapping Hand and the Talking Skull, which answered questions by snapping its jaw.

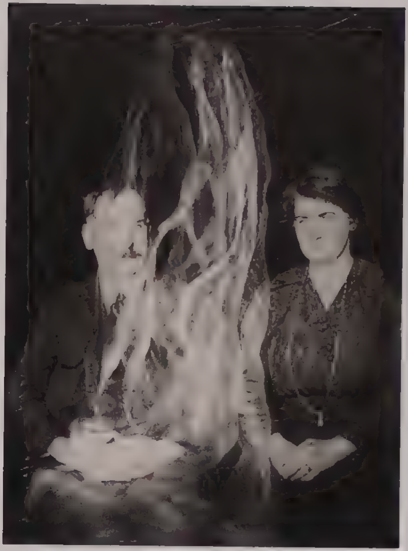
BOTTOM RIGHT: **1886** The technique of spirit photography (using double exposure to produce transparent images) was still new when Jacoby-Harms included these pictures in his book. In the photograph below, the magician appears to dance with a spirit skeleton—it was the result of a double exposure and intricately staged props.

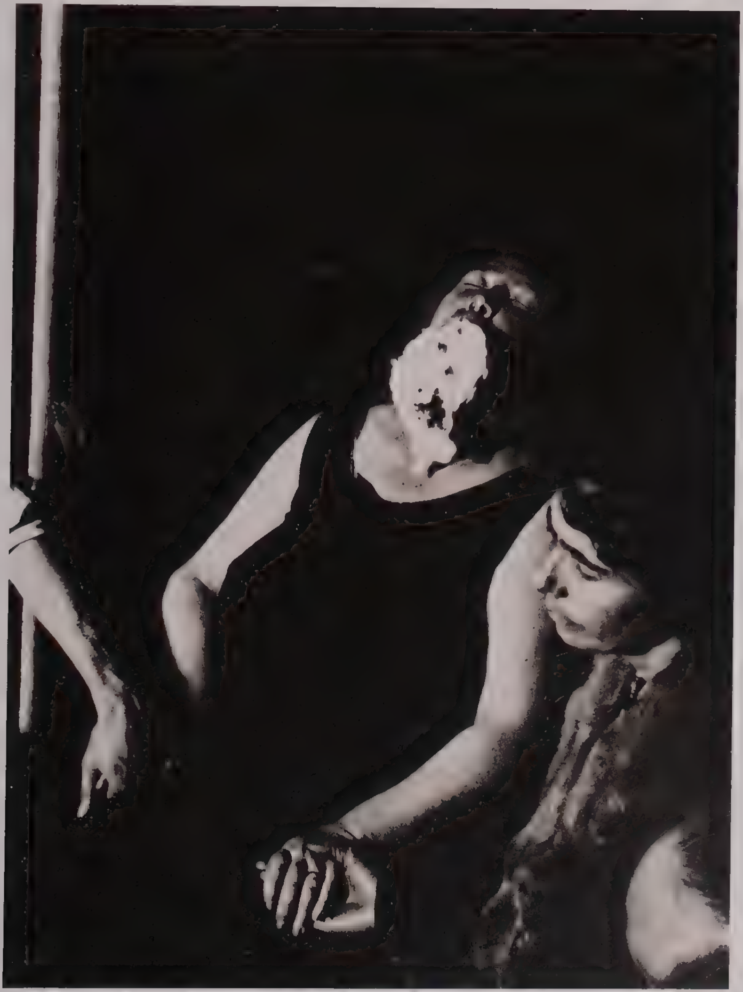












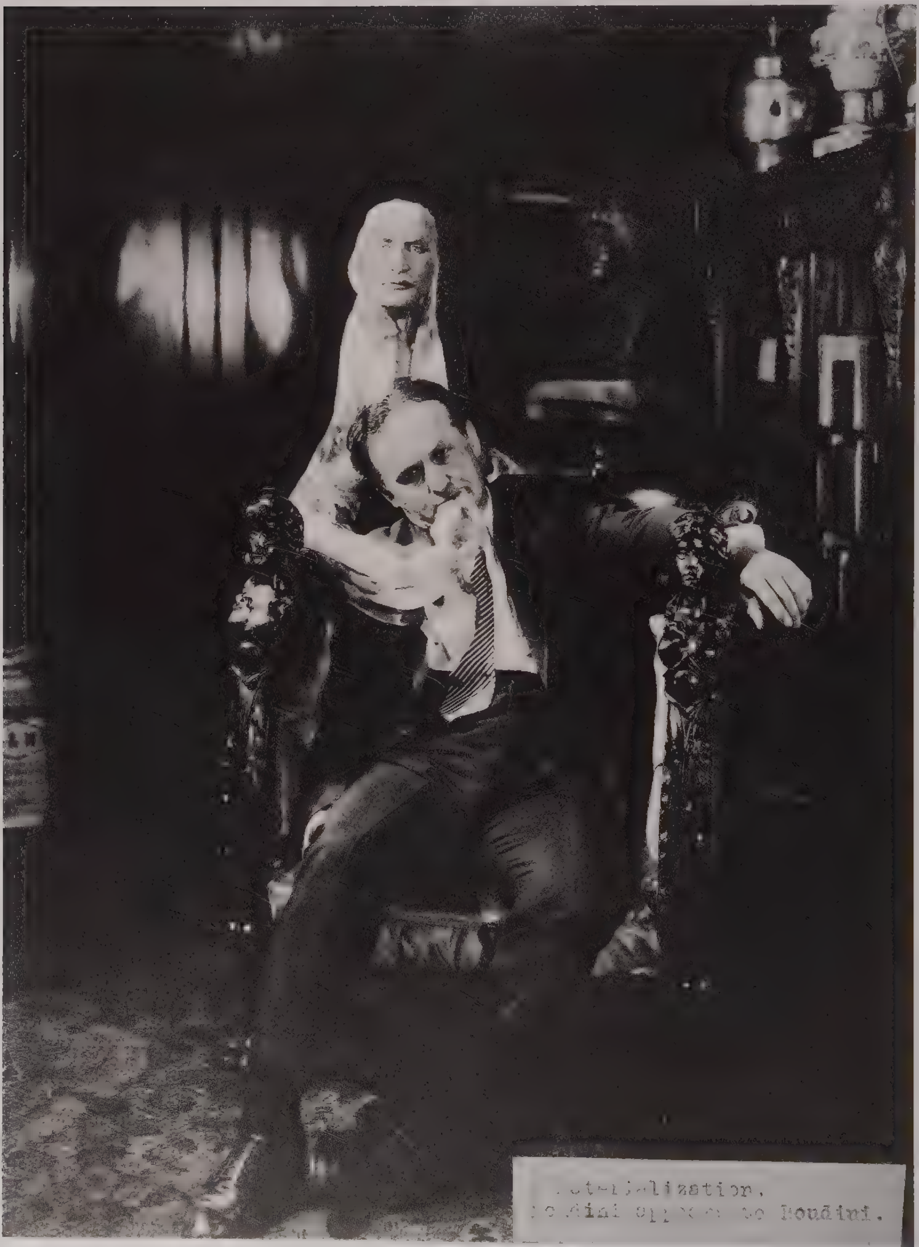
OPPOSITE: **1863** A year after the English scientist Professor John Henry Pepper produced three-dimensional, translucent ghosts on his stage, the French magician Henri Robin used Pepper's technique to produce ghosts in his own shows. For advertising purposes, Robin had photographer Eugène Thiébault use double exposures in this photograph to show how his ghosts would appear onstage.

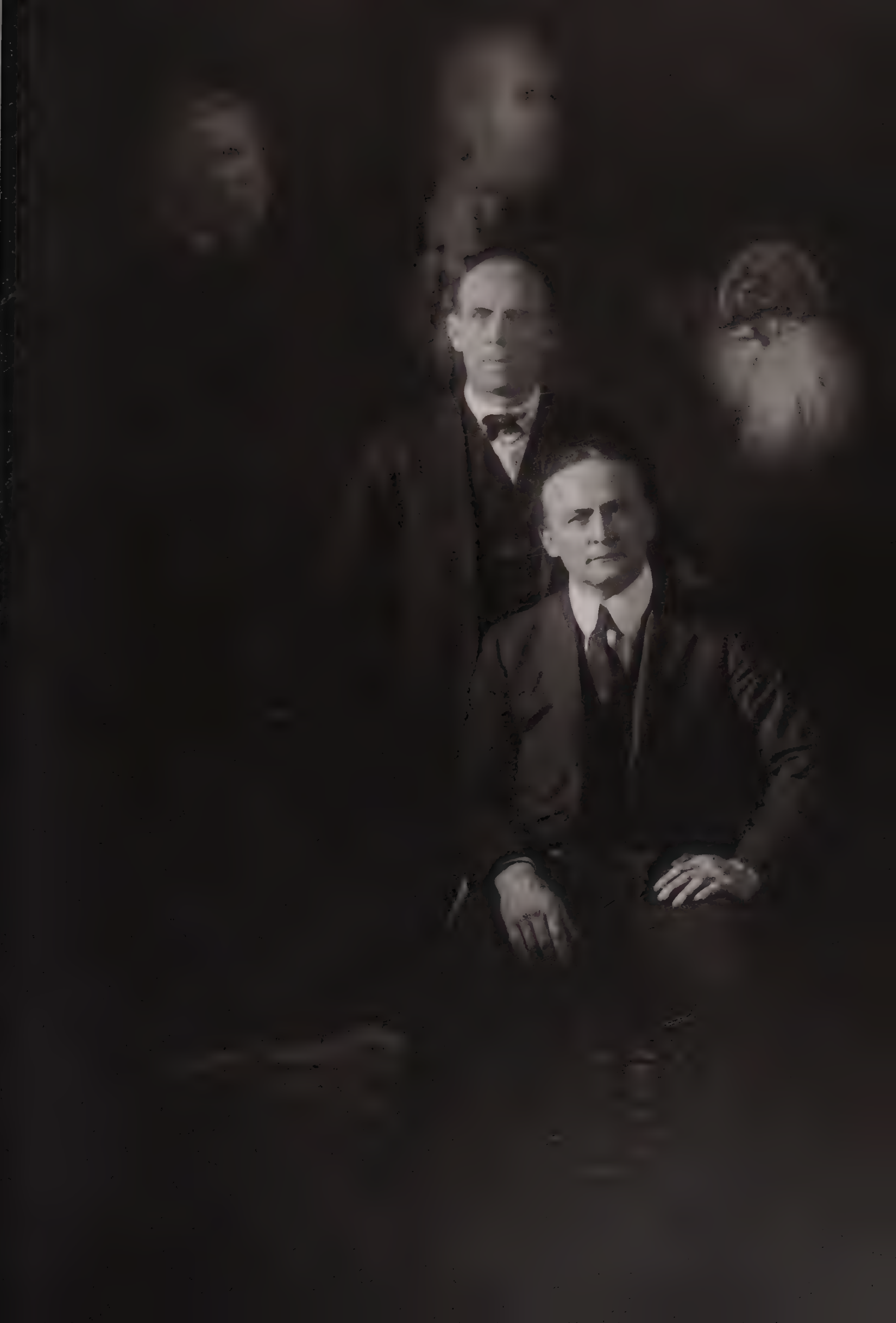
ABOVE: **ca. 1925 and ca. 1920** William Mumler, a Boston-based amateur photographer, produced the first spirit photograph in 1861, just decades after the first photos. Spirit photos were easy to produce, and the process was used by hundreds of mediums to generate mementos of the séance room.

LEFT: **1929** *Ectoplasm* was the Spiritualists' term for a mysterious substance, alternately smokelike, gauzelike, or fleshlike, that emanated from the medium's body during a séance. This snapshot of the medium Mary M. (Dawn Mary Marshall) supposedly shows ectoplasm emerging from her mouth.

BELOW: **ca. 1925** A crusader against fraudulent Spiritualists, Houdini produced his own ectoplasm photograph to demonstrate that he could duplicate the Spiritualists' best work with simple trickery. Here the ectoplasm emanates from his mouth and takes the form of his own portrait!

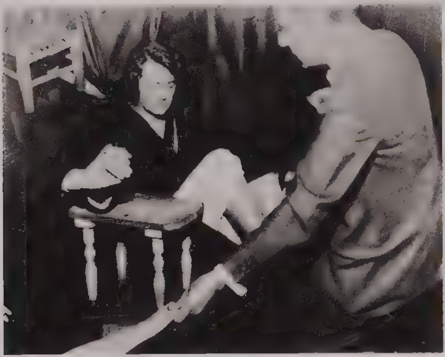
OPPOSITE: **1923** Houdini, seated, and his chief assistant, Jim Collins, standing, tested spirit photographer Alexander Martin of Denver, Colorado. When they posed, Houdini attempted to move Collins to his other side, but Martin insisted Collins move back. To Houdini, this proved that the plate had already been exposed with carefully positioned ghosts.

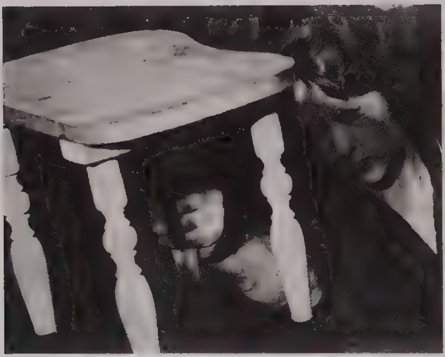




RIGHT: **ca. 1926** By the mid-1800s, the Fox Sisters had created a fashion for séances, and many attempted to produce séance phenomena. This is a typical instruction book for curious readers. The floating table, pictured on the cover, became a specialty of Margery, the famous Boston medium, in the 1920s.

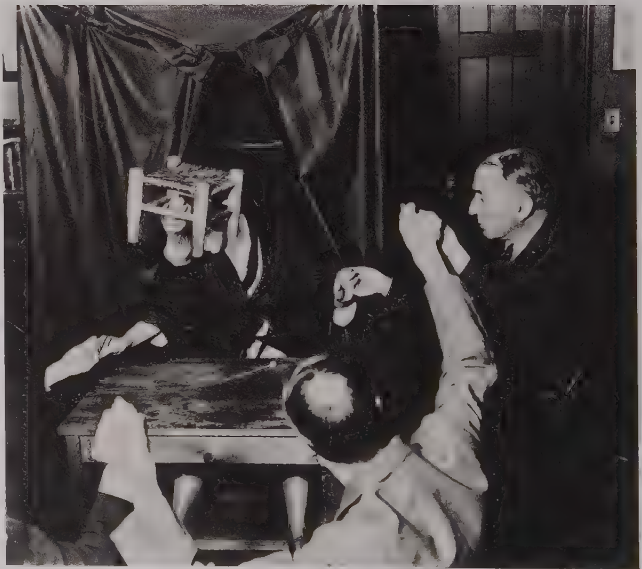
SPIRIT RAPPING
MADE EASY



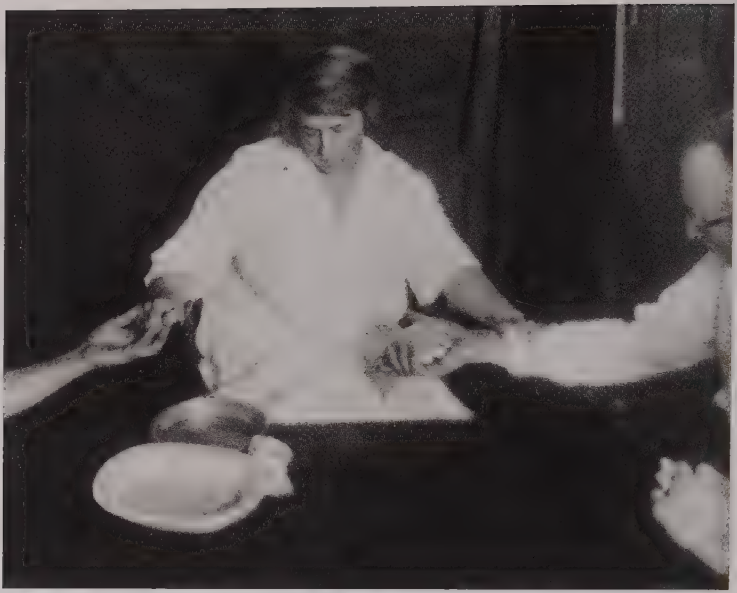


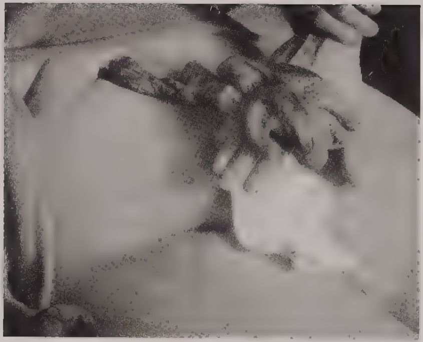
ABOVE AND RIGHT: **ca. 1930** Mina Crandon was the wife of prominent Boston surgeon Le Roi Crandon. Known to Spiritualists as Margery the Boston Medium, she was one of the most successful and controversial mediums of all time. These snapshots were taken during one of her séances. They show a floating footstool, which seems to be held firmly by a hand, emerging from a curtained cabinet. Is it a crude trick, or the actual hand of her spirit guide, Walter, as Margery claimed?

OPPOSITE: **ca. 1930** This photo captures a table flying through the air during a Margery séance. In 1925, Margery was examined by a committee from *Scientific American* magazine. Many agreed that her phenomena were genuine. Houdini, a member of the committee, was sure he had discerned the tricks.



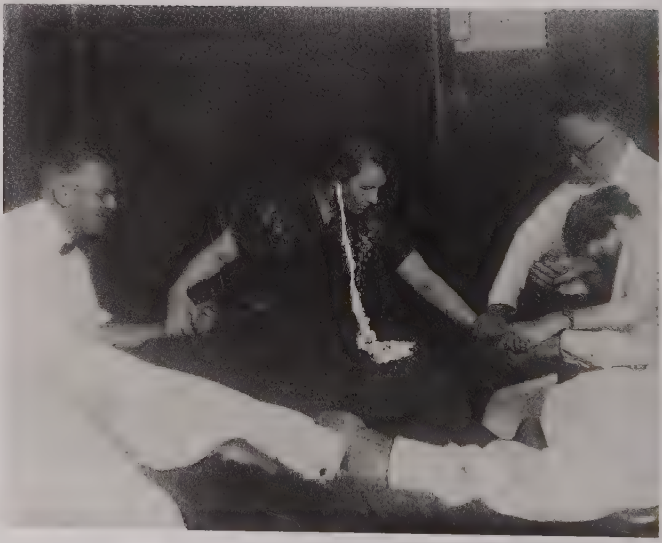
RIGHT: **ca. 1930** An ectoplasmic hand, supposedly of Margery's spirit guide, Walter, seems to emerge from Margery's body. This was recorded during the séance with flash photography. According to accounts, the hand was actually cut from some sort of organ or tissue, like a cow's liver, and produced in the darkness.



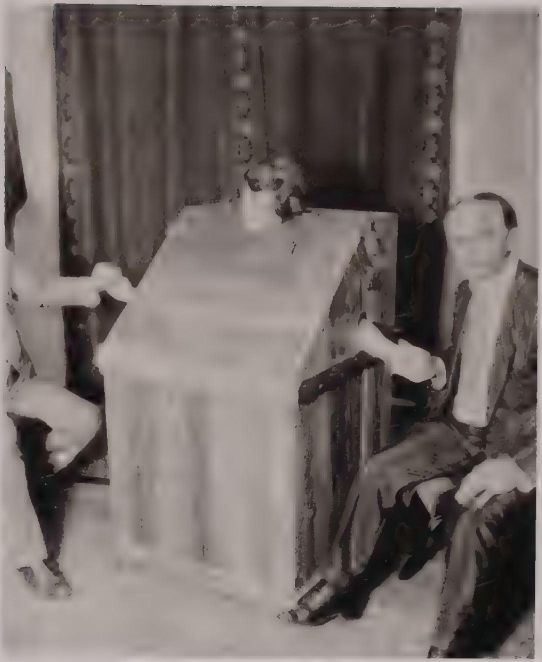


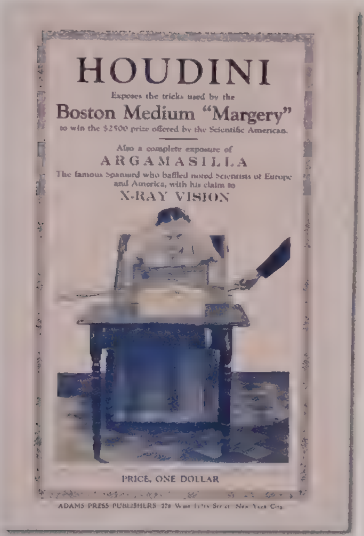
ABOVE: **ca. 1930** This unusual photograph shows a grotesque hand that supposedly formed from Margery's navel during her séances. Margery enticed many male investigators by performing naked, covered only with a silk robe, or by displaying parts of her body in provocative ways.

RIGHT: **ca. 1930** This photograph shows ectoplasm emanating from Margery's body. Unlike some mediums, who created pretty ectoplasm shapes in the form of smoke or gauze, Margery's phenomenon was grotesque and horrific. Witnesses described it as resembling some sort of organ or animal tissue.



RIGHT: **1924** To test Margery, Houdini designed a fraud-proof wooden box. This photo shows Margery locked inside, and Houdini holding her hand. The results were dramatic but inconclusive. In the dark room, the lid of the box broke, and Houdini accused Margery of cheating. Margery's spirit guide shouted obscenities, claiming that Houdini had tried to frame the medium.





HOUDINI

Exposes the tricks used by the

Boston Medium "Margery"

to win the $2500 prize offered by the Scientific American.

Also a complete exposure of

ARGAMASILLA

The famous Spaniard who baffled noted Scientists of Europe and America, with his claim to

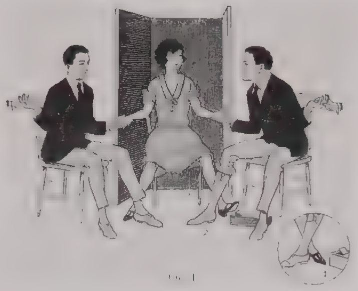
X-RAY VISION

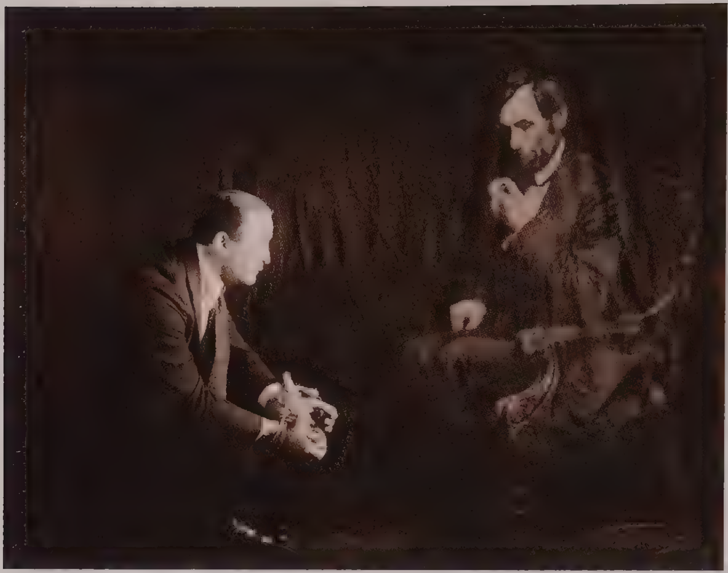
PRICE, ONE DOLLAR

ADAMS PRESS PUBLISHERS 278 West [illegible] Street New York City

LEFT AND BOTTOM RIGHT: **1924** After the death of his mother in 1913, Harry Houdini pursued Spiritualism as a means to contact her, but was disenchanted with the obvious frauds he encountered. After investigating Margery, Houdini published a booklet, left, with his exposure of Margery's secrets. He was certain she was a fraud.

BOTTOM LEFT: **1924** Margery's phenomena in the séance room were bold, daring, and controversial. A small wooden box, fitted with a switch, a battery, and a bell, was placed on the floor between Houdini's feet. The bell rang in the darkened room. Houdini later wrote that he felt Margery's leg brush against his own, reaching for the bell. This snapshot was taken during the séance.

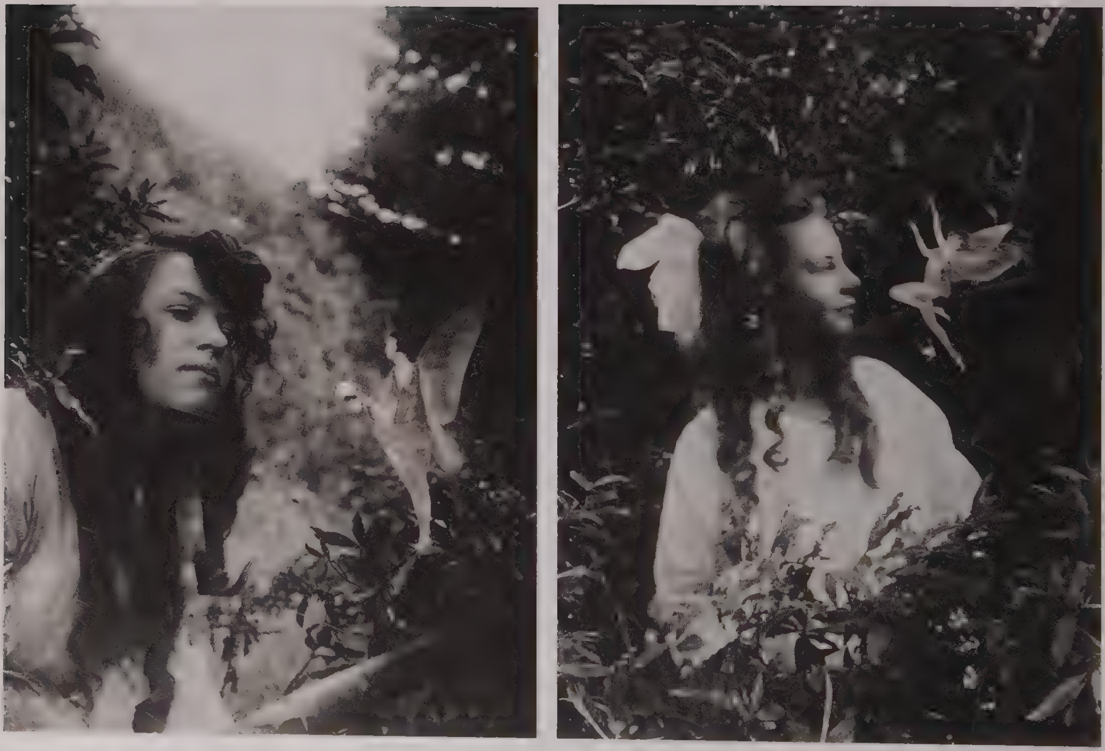




LEFT: **ca. 1924** This carefully staged spirit photograph shows Houdini supposedly speaking to the ghost of Abraham Lincoln. The picture was one of the glass slides used by Houdini in 1925 and 1926 to illustrate his lecture on the various forms of trickery used by spirit mediums.

OPPOSITE: **1924** Houdini's story in *Weird Tales* was a fictional adventure about one of his daring Spiritualist exposures. By this time, his role of psychic investigator had achieved mythic status. "It is much more lucrative to be a charlatan medium than an honest magician," Houdini wrote. "Rich dupes pay well."

BELOW: **1917** The Cottingley Fairies demonstrated Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's gullibility. Doyle was the author of the Sherlock Holmes stories, a devoted Spiritualist, and a friend of Houdini. When two young girls in Cottingley, England, claimed to have photographed fairies in a local garden, Doyle investigated and found the girls trustworthy. Many years later, the two women confessed to having used paper cutouts.



Weird Tales

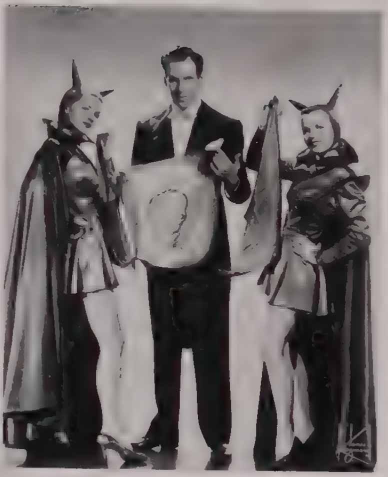
THE UNIQUE MAGAZINE

The
SPIRIT LOVER
by
HOUDINI

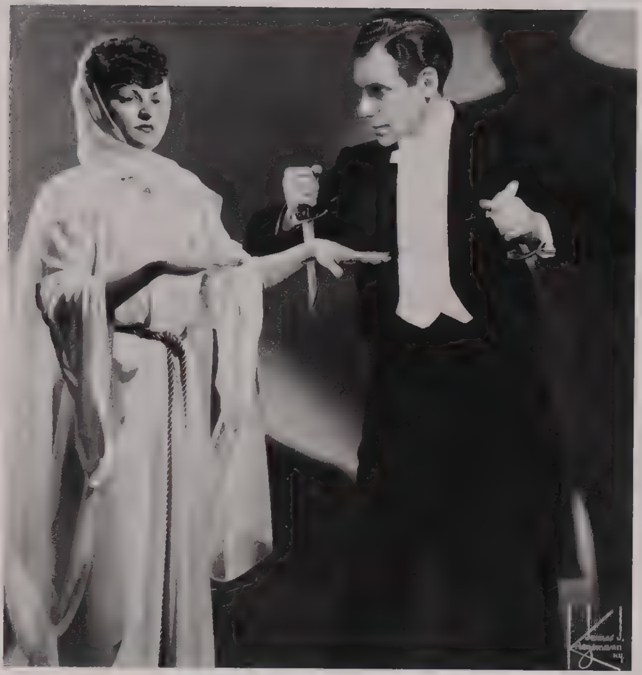
*An Astounding Expose
of Fraud Mediums*

APRIL 1924
25¢

LIVRE ROUGE

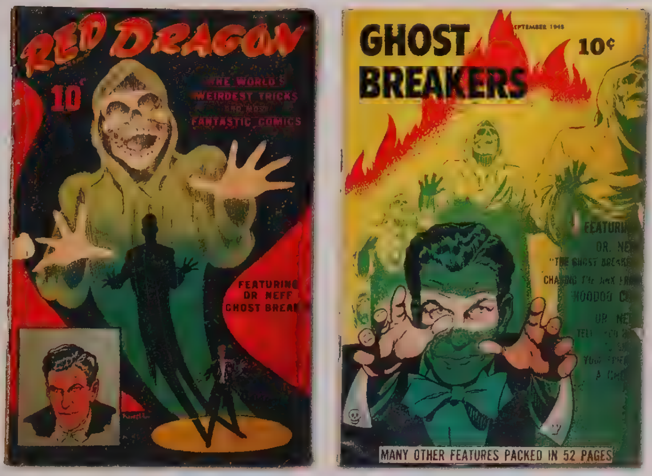


BELOW: **ca. 1948** The midnight ghost show was the desperate last gasp of spiritual magic shows, ending a century-long tradition. Bill Neff was a talented American magician who found success performing a horror show that included torture tricks and ghostly apparitions. Here he impales a hypnotized assistant.



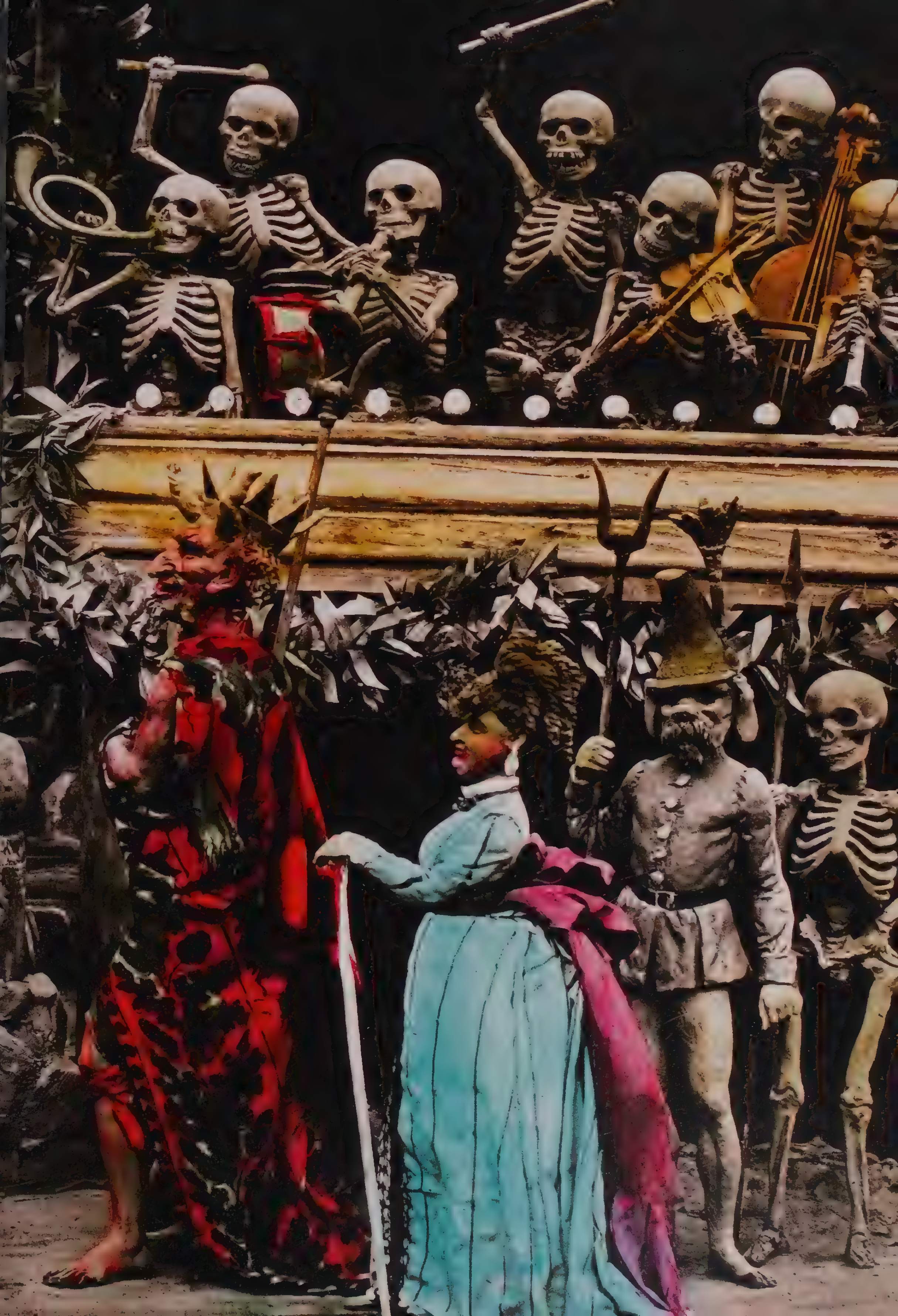
ABOVE: **ca. 1948** Neff's performances were often midnight shows at local movie theaters, preceding popular horror films. They drew hundreds of raucous teenagers. Like any good horror movie, his show relied on a suspenseful mix of attractive assistants and the occasional snarling monster or grasping skeleton.

OPPOSITE: **ca. 1869** Pierre Adolphe Hennetier and Alfred Habert portrayed the tortures of Hell in their miniature sculptures. These images, of skeletons, cremation, and impalement, later formed the central images in live spook shows, mixing magic with horror. Such spook shows were popular from the 1930s through the 1950s.


RED DRAGON
10¢
THE WORLD'S WEIRDEST TRICKS AND MOST FANTASTIC COMICS
FEATURING DR NEFF GHOST BREAK
GHOST BREAKERS
SEPTEMBER 1948
10¢
MANY OTHER FEATURES PACKED IN 52 PAGES

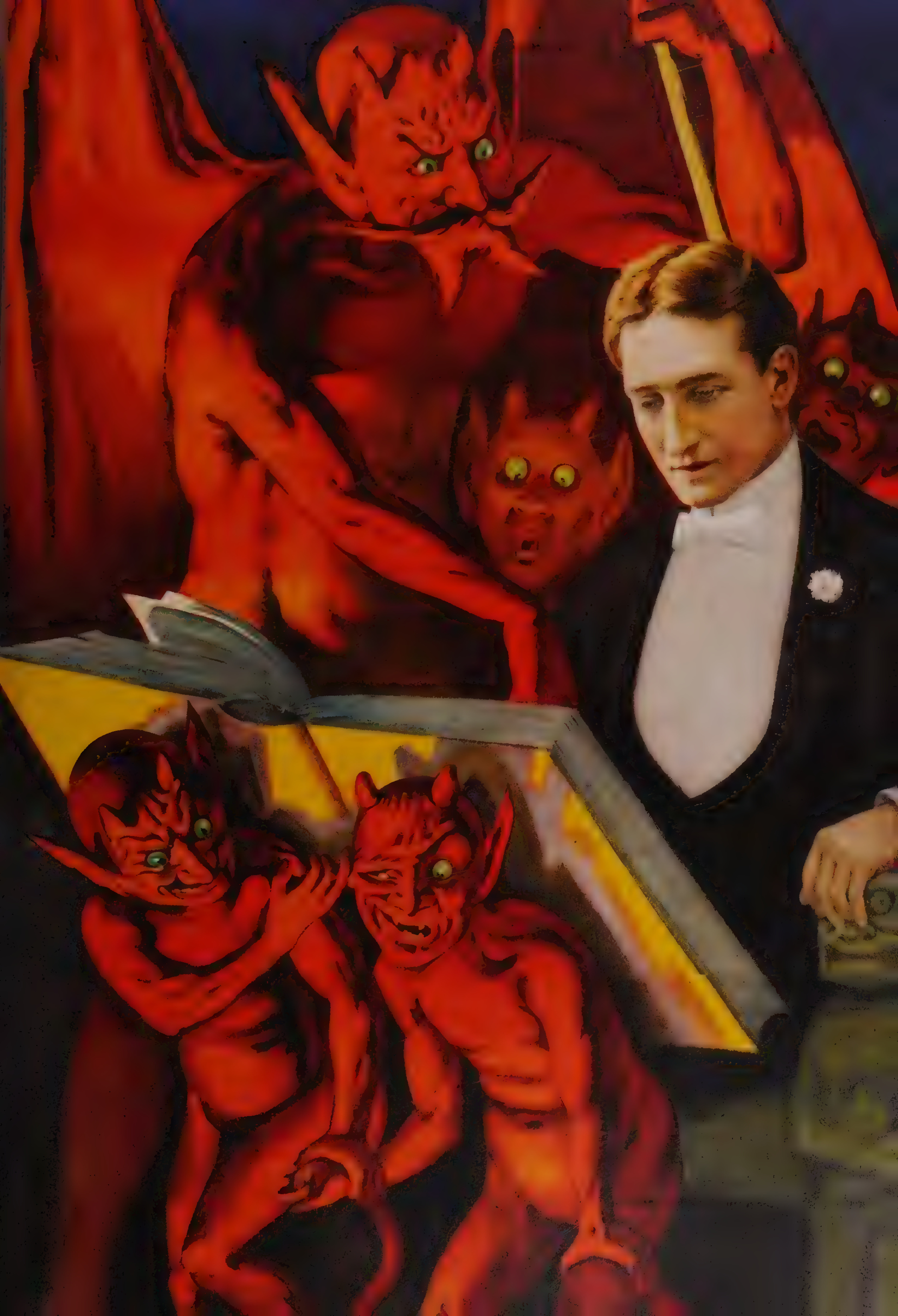
LEFT: **1948** Neff's intended audience was the comic book–reading adolescent who wanted supernatural thrills. The magician even appeared as a comic-book character, Dr. Neff, a "ghost breaker," near left, to promote his show. A typical line of dialogue: "Tonight, I will challenge the ghost to a duel!"

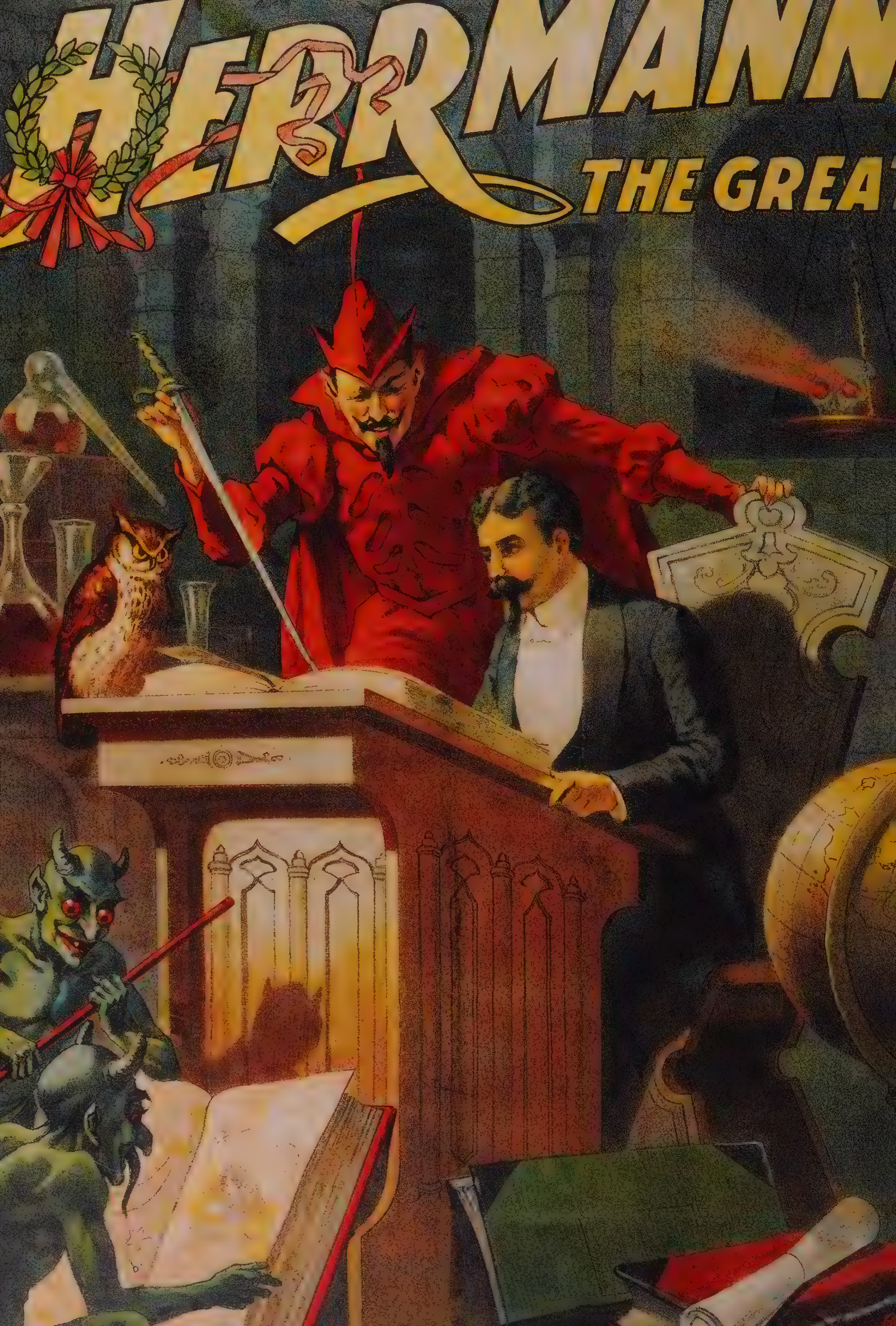
PAGES 258–259: **ca. 1869** This hand-tinted image by Hennetier and Habert shows the Sun's visit to Satan. Even the source of all light must occasionally descend to Hell and pay his respects to the Prince of Darkness. The image is a fitting analogy for magic's perennial interest in horrors and the occult. Audiences are always tantalized by darkness.



MASTERS OF THE GOLDEN AGE

Mike Caveney




HERRMANN
THE GREA

5

Mike Caveney

MASTERS OF THE GOLDEN AGE

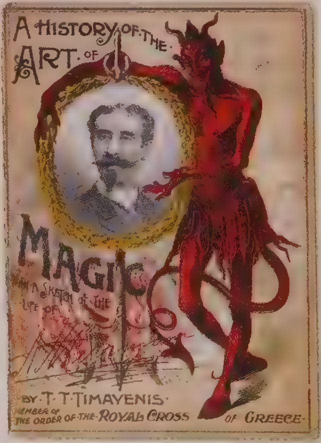
From the audience's point of view, the magician's job is to bathe them in a sense of wonder and delight by showing them a world where reality is turned on its head. It all seems like great fun unless one is allowed to peek backstage. Behind the scenes, the job of operating a touring illusion show is serious business. In addition to booking and advertising the shows, and packing and moving the equipment, there is always the problem of keeping up with the competition. In any territory, whether it be a city, a country, or a continent, there are a limited number of quality theaters, and when more than one magician is vying for those desirable venues, the business of magic becomes all-out war.

PAGE 261: **1916** Young Howard Thurston, who would soon become magic's reigning star in America, is tutored by demons and goblins as he studies the book of secrets. This poster evoked in sophisticated audiences a sense of fantasy and fun while the superstitious readily attributed the magician's power to supernatural forces.

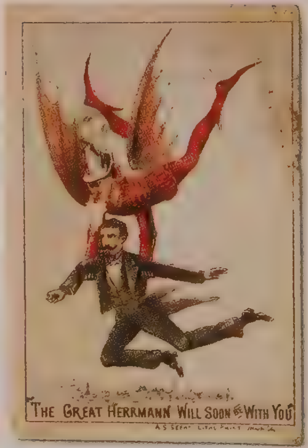
OPPOSITE: **ca. 1900** The image of a past master mentoring a young conjurer is intriguing, but when that mentor is the Devil himself the message is dramatically altered. This poster of Leon Herrmann, nephew of Alexander Herrmann, suggests that he was aided by more than just 10 nimble fingers and a glib tongue.

LEFT: 1886 Born into a family of magicians, Alexander Herrmann became the quintessential magician of his time, which became known as the golden age of magic. This formal portrait shows him brimming with confidence even though his greatest triumphs were yet to come. Herrmann looked and acted the part of a conjurer, never missing an opportunity to give impromptu public performances.

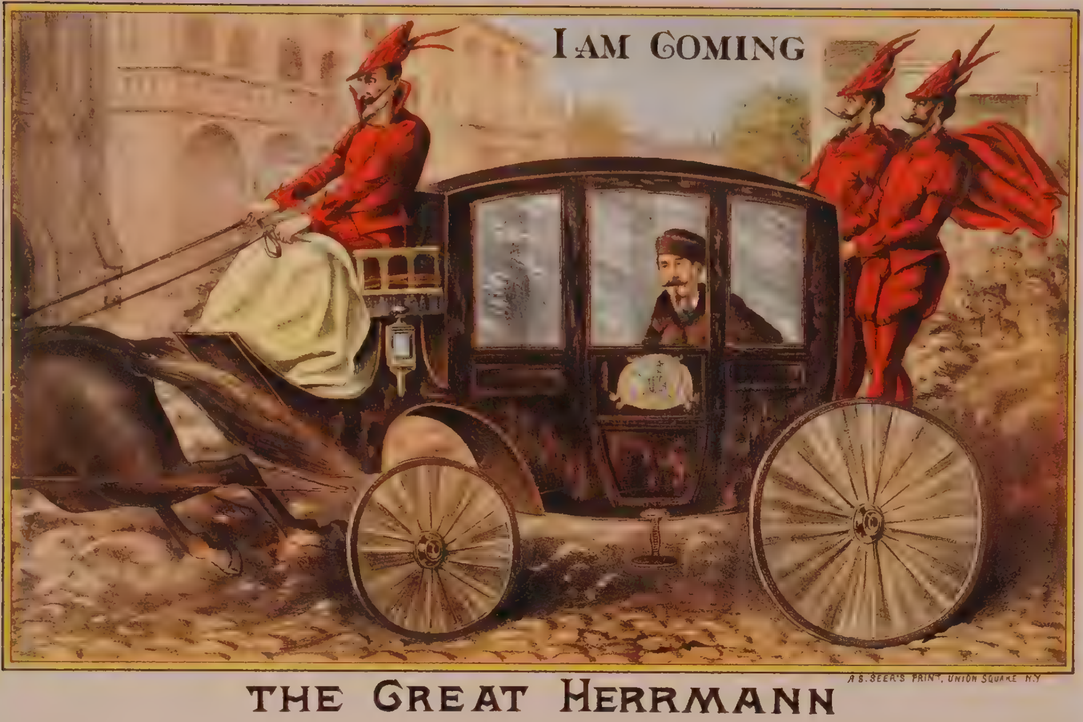
Toward the end of the 19th century, magic shows were growing in popularity and profitability, and two magicians dominated the field in the United States: first, there was Alexander Herrmann, a Parisian who was born into a family of magicians in 1844, and who came to the States in 1874. Herrmann's primary competitor was the homegrown favorite, Pennsylvania-born Harry Kellar. But Kellar, the more serious of the two, limited his performances to the theater, while the more comedic Herrmann delighted in impromptu performances in places of business or right out on the street. Both men had a deep love for the art of magic, and they shared a competitive spirit and sense of wanderlust. Both were also driven to be number one in the growing business of magical entertainment.


A HISTORY OF THE ART OF MAGIC
WITH A SKETCH OF THE LIFE OF
BY T. T. TIMAYENIS
MEMBER OF THE ORDER OF THE ROYAL CROSS OF GREECE

NEAR RIGHT: 1887 When T. T. Timayenis wrote *A History of the Art of Magic*, he placed Alexander Herrmann's portrait on the cover, knowing that he was the most widely known magician to the general public at the time. A later edition published in 1901 claimed that an astonishing 70,000 copies had been printed.

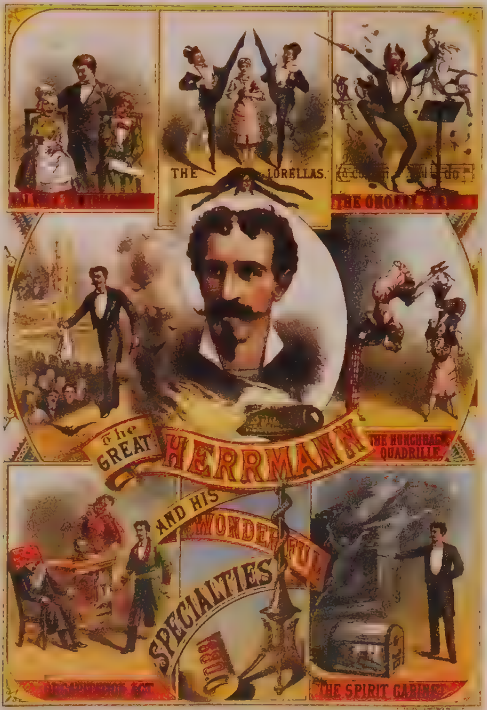

THE GREAT HERRMANN WILL SOON BE WITH YOU

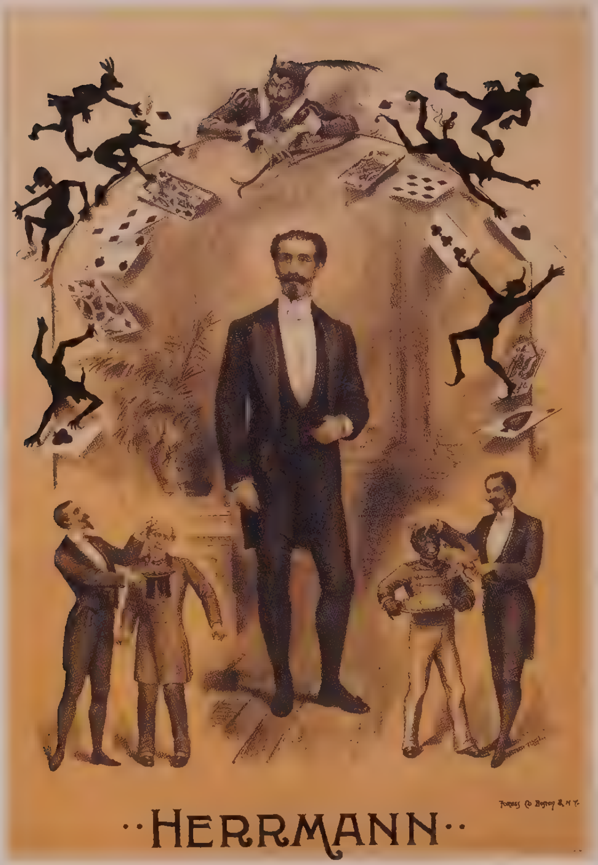
FAR RIGHT: 1883 This Alexander Herrmann advertisement, roughly the size of a postcard, was economical to print and convenient to distribute. The fantastic image on the front would certainly grab viewers' attention, and on the back they would find the pertinent details: "Music Hall, one night only, Wednesday, January 31, 1883. Reserved seats at Kenney's Music Store."


I AM COMING
A. S. SEER'S PRINT, UNION SQUARE N.Y.
THE GREAT HERRMANN

ABOVE: **ca. 1875** This intriguing lithograph, produced by A. S. Seer of New York City, announced Alexander Herrmann's triumphant return to the United States following his lengthy tour of Europe. The Herrmann name was already widely known in America, thus nothing more needed to be said than "I am coming."

RIGHT: **1880** For this season Alexander Herrmann produced his own variety show consisting of ventriloquism, eccentric dancing, comedic musicians, tumblers, and plenty of Herrmann's signature illusions. The Herrmann name served as a guarantee that all of the supporting performers were of the highest quality.


THE LORELLAS.
THE HUNCHBACK QUADRILLE.
The GREAT HERRMANN AND HIS WONDERFUL SPECIALTIES
1880
THE SPIRIT CABINET



LEFT: **ca. 1880** Early in his career Alexander Herrmann entertained his audiences with small-scale tricks such as removing a seemingly endless number of eggs from a befuddled assistant's mouth (in the image, bottom right). In the years to come, larger and more spectacular illusions would be added to his show as he climbed to the top of his profession.

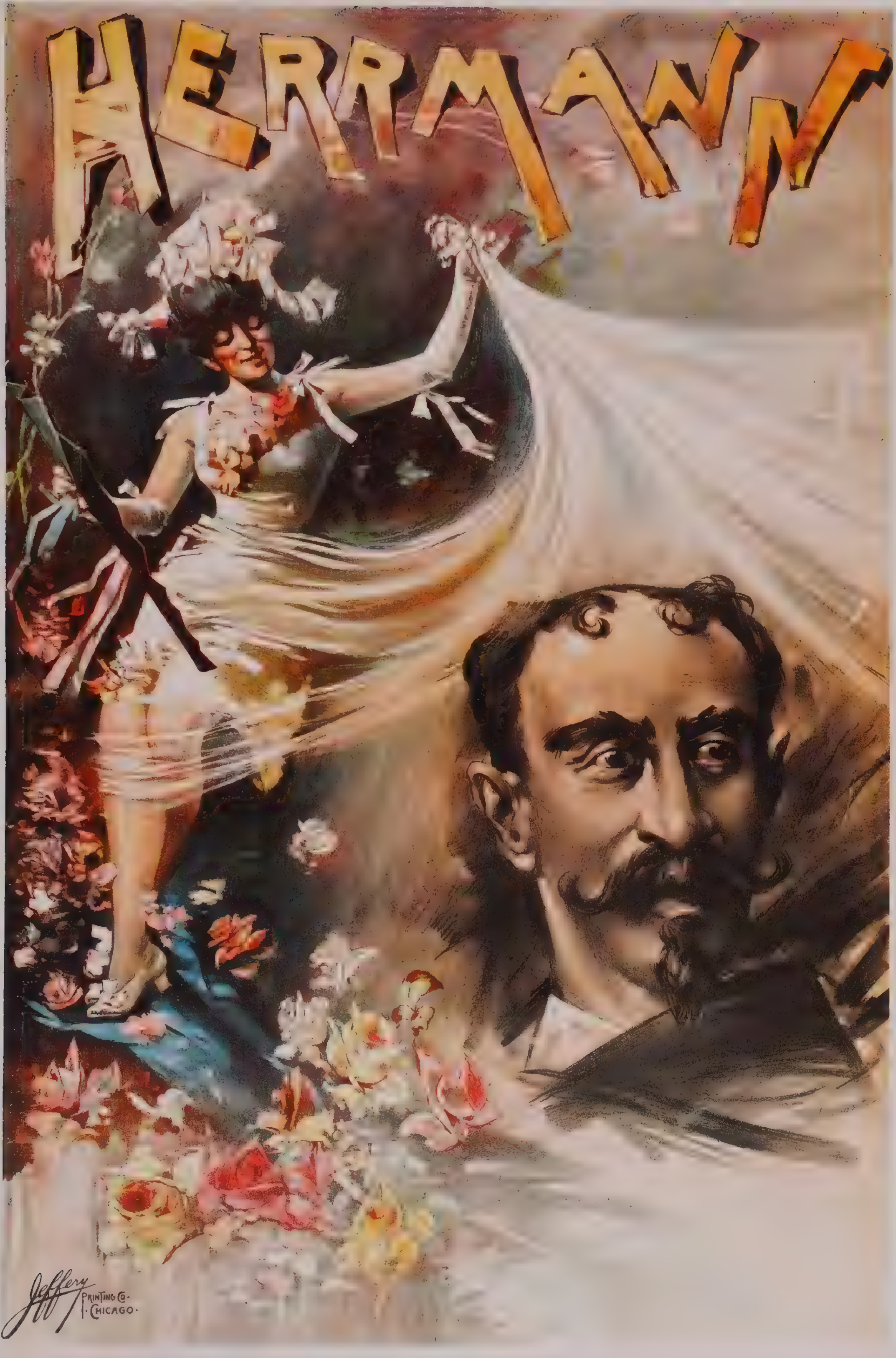
OPPOSITE: **ca. 1885** The name "Herrmann" on this stunning poster refers both to Alexander and his wife, Adelaide. It is rare for a performer to share his billing with anyone else, but Adelaide played a major role in the show, and thus her image was included in this design.

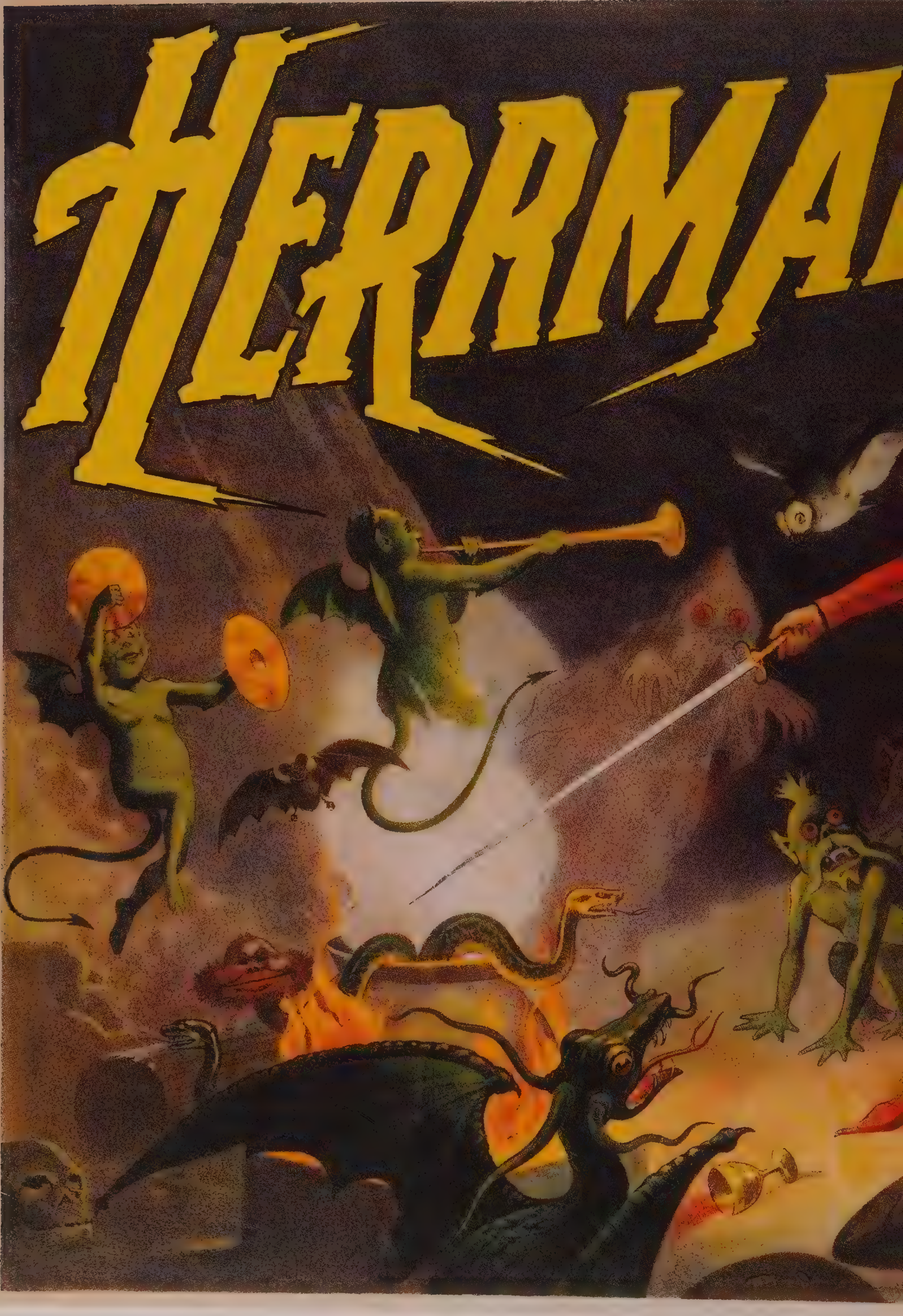
PAGES 268–269: **ca. 1885** Since magic exists only in spectators' minds, magicians rely on promotional images that are simultaneously fanciful, exotic, and terrifying to fuel their audiences' imaginations. This poster of Alexander Herrmann promises no specific tricks, just entrance into a fantastic world.

The Quintessential Look: Mustache, Goatee & Tailcoat

The Herrmann dynasty, including father Samuel, sons Carl and Alexander, and nephews Leon and Felix, established the quintessential look of a magician that remains today. The waxed mustache and goatee, formal tailcoat, and knee breeches were pure Herrmann. Alexander, who would become the most famous of the Herrmanns in America, appeared for an astonishing 1,000 consecutive nights at Egyptian Hall in London before settling permanently in the United States. He appealed to the upper classes on both continents by appearing in opera houses, and relying on his skilled fingers and glib tongue to entertain his audiences. As his success grew, so did the size of his show, with the addition of ever-larger stage illusions. In his famous cremation illusion, for example, a gigantic wall of fire appeared to consume his wife, Adelaide; in his decapitation illusion, a man was seemingly beheaded and his severed head placed on top of a cabinet, where it casually carried on a conversation. These spectacular effects were graphically illustrated on full-color posters, which boosted ticket sales. As if to confirm his standing as North America's most famous magician, Herrmann and his wife traveled between cities in a luxurious private train car that had previously belonged to celebrated English actress Lillie Langtry.

The man who would challenge Alexander Herrmann for the title of America's premier illusionist was Harry Kellar, who learned his trade by touring the world, first as assistant to and business manager for the Davenport Brothers, the famous American Spiritualists, and later with his own full-evening show. The travails of circumnavigating the globe during the 1870s were eloquently stated in one of Kellar's letters home: "In a wagon without springs, dragged by eighteen bullocks, a man's anatomy, as well as his temper, is likely to reach a state of collapse." After enduring such hardships for 11 years, Kellar returned home only to discover that Herrmann was firmly entrenched as North America's foremost conjurer. With Kellar determined to succeed in his home country, the Kellar-Herrmann rivalry soon turned into an all-out war. On July 18, 1888, the *New York Dramatic Mirror* reported, "The breach between the two great magicians, Kellar and Herrmann, appears to be growing wider day by day, and though there has been no blood shed as yet, there is no telling what a day will bring forth."


HERRMANN
Jeffery Printing Co. Chicago.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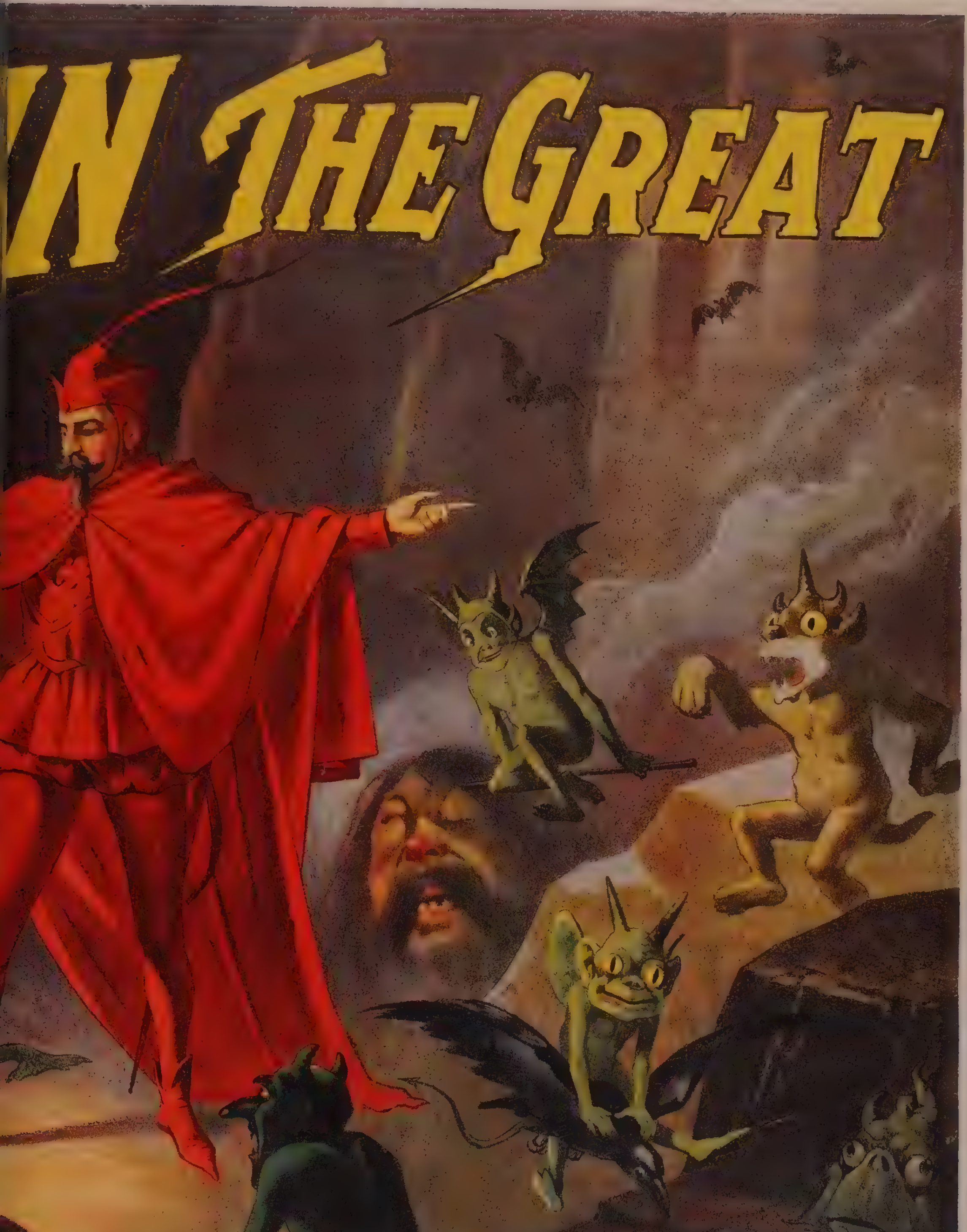
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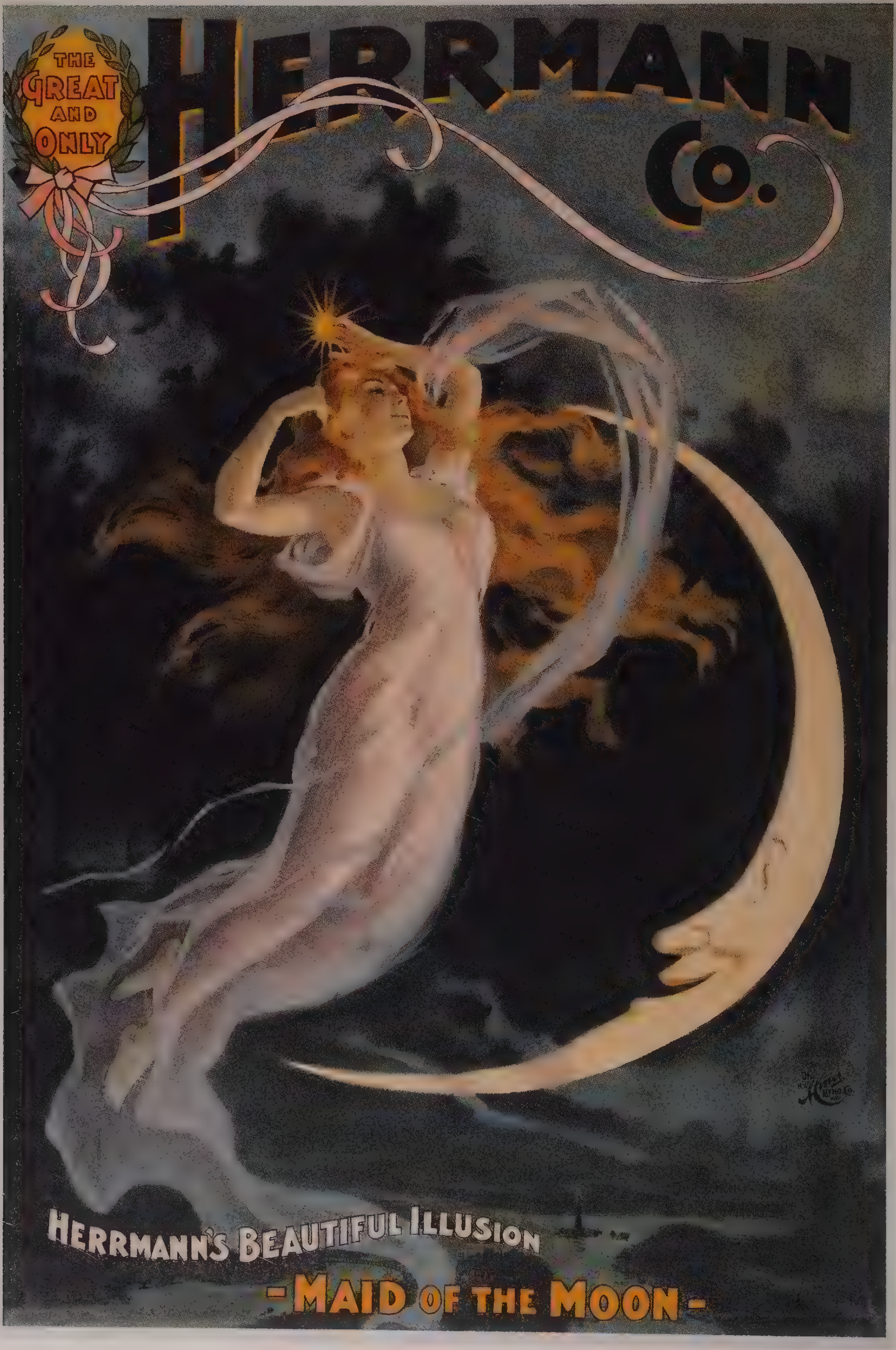
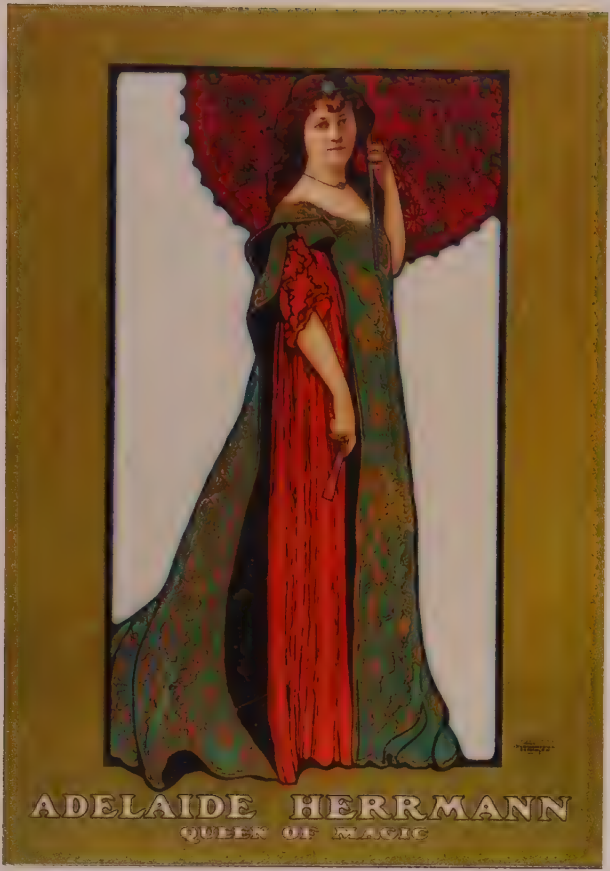
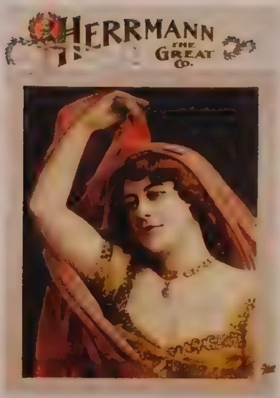

The Great and Only
Herrmann Co.
Herrmann's Beautiful Illusion
-Maid of the Moon-



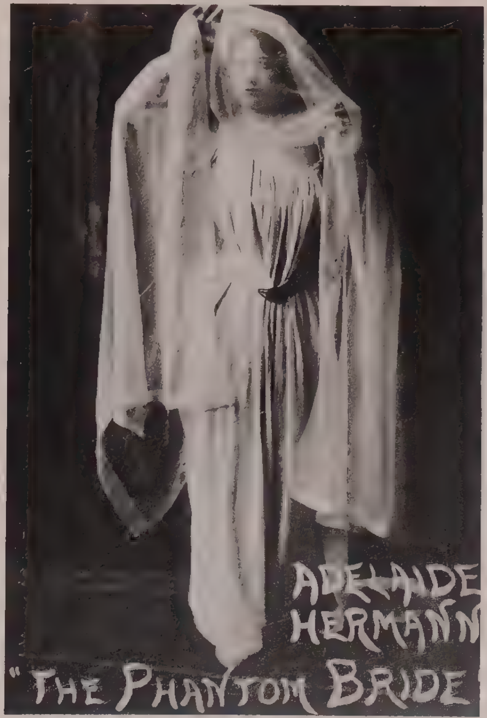


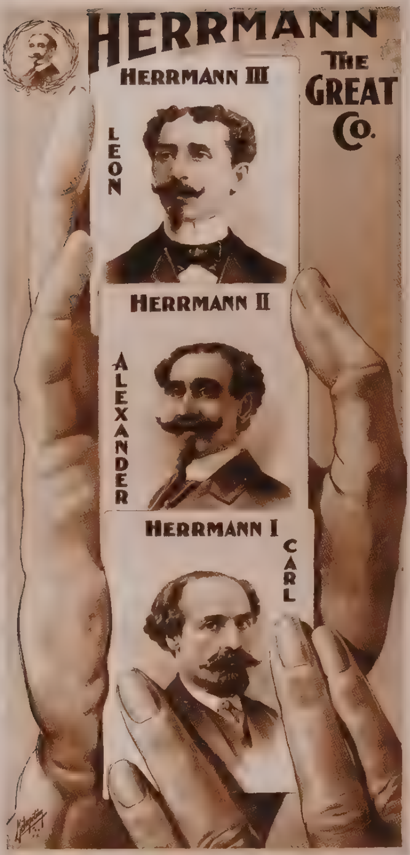
ABOVE: **ca. 1897** Alexander Herrmann married a British-born dancer named Adelaide Scarsez. Following the untimely death of her husband in 1896, Adelaide teamed up with her nephew Leon, who assumed the role of Herrmann the Great. After just three years, the two parted ways due to a clash of temperaments.

LEFT: **1903** Following the demise of her short-lived partnership with nephew Leon, Adelaide Herrmann still owned a warehouse full of magic props and that all-important Herrmann name. She continued performing magic in vaudeville for an astonishing 32 years until she was nearly 75 years old, retiring in 1928.

RIGHT: **ca. 1894** Layers of gauze transform Adelaide into the ghostly Phantom Bride. In this stunning illusion, invented by William Ellsworth Robinson, a lady seated in a chair was hoisted into the air. The firing of a pistol and a puff of smoke caused the lady to disappear as the empty chair fell to the floor.

OPPOSITE: **ca. 1898** Maid of the Moon was a new take on a classic illusion wherein a woman floated effortlessly into the air and then proceeded to walk back and forth, dance, and finally skip through a hoop to prove that nothing was supporting her. Alexander Herrmann's assistant, William Ellsworth Robinson, invented this diabolical illusion; his wife, Dot, defied gravity each evening.



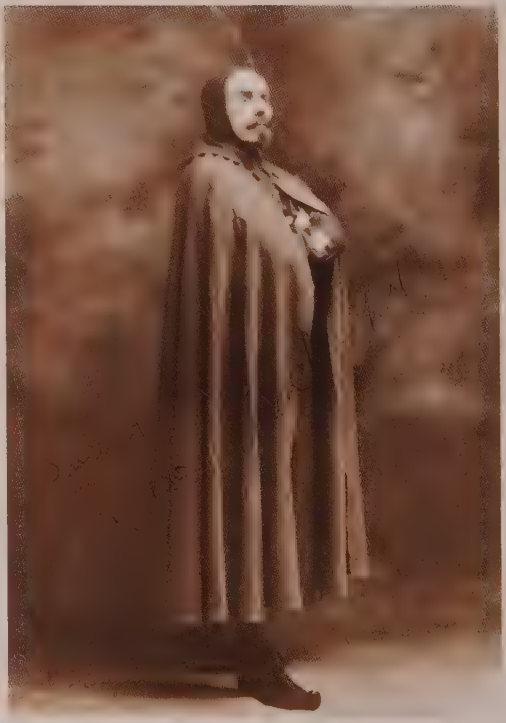


LEFT: **ca. 1900** The concept of passing secrets from one generation to the next was very alluring to the general public during magic's golden age. Here young Leon capitalizes on the fame of his two legendary uncles, Alexander and Carl. This rare poster suggests a formal passing of the mantle when in fact it was nothing more than a smart business ploy on the part of Leon.

OPPOSITE, TOP LEFT: **ca. 1897** Knowing the value of the Mephistophelian look that had been forged by his two famous uncles, Carl and Alexander Herrmann, young Leon Herrmann adopted the same appearance, here with imps and a magic wand. Even today, more than 100 years later, when the public is asked to visualize a magician, it is the image of a Herrmann that comes to mind.

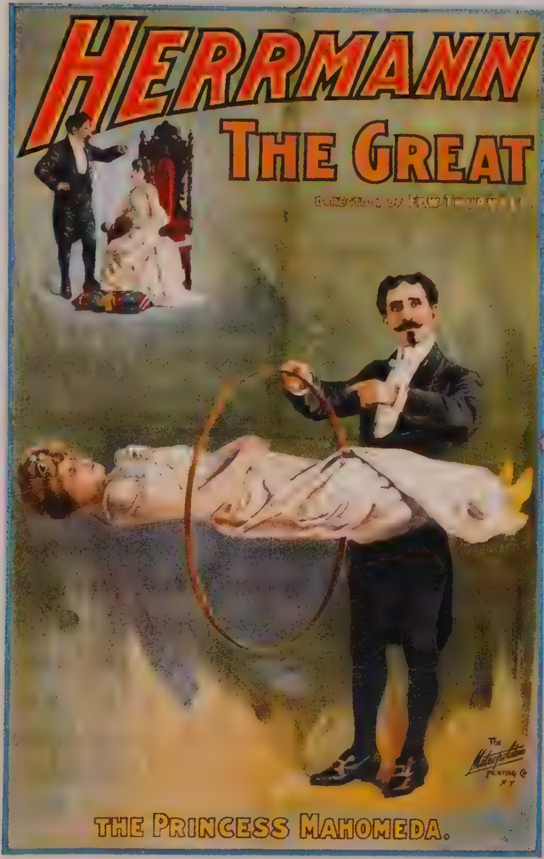
Herrmann & Kellar:
Two Great Wizards in All-Out War

Like prizefighters squaring off in the ring, the two wizards would go out of their way to appear in the same city at the same time, then slug it out on their respective stages and allow the box office to determine a winner. During one such magic duel in Montreal, Canada, Herrmann accused Kellar's manager of plastering Kellar posters over his own, all around town. In the September 22, 1894, edition of the *New York Dramatic Mirror*, Kellar's manager, Dudley McAdow, elaborated on the skirmish: "We did not seek the fight ... I fairly covered the city of Montreal with [play] bills and lithographs ... no stone was left unturned and the result was that our rival was out-advertised from the start." Nowhere in the article did McAdow deny covering up Herrmann's posters.

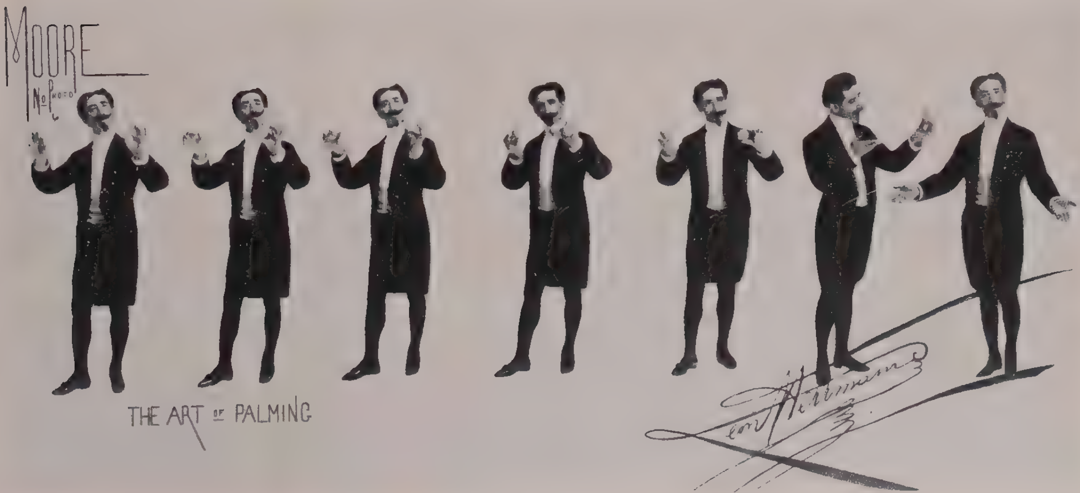


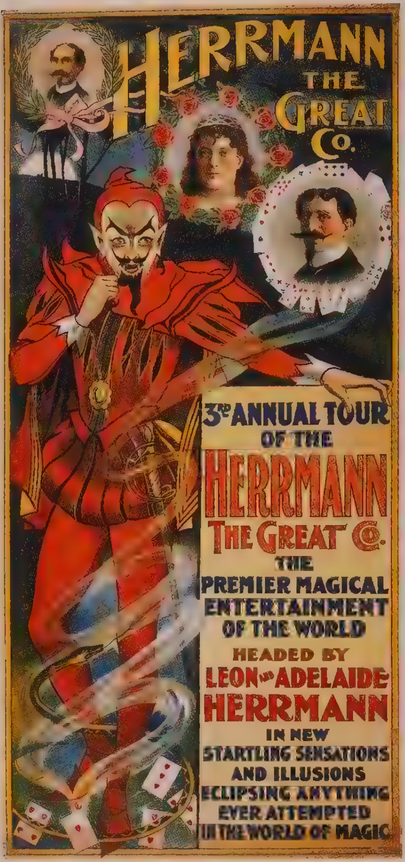
RIGHT: **ca. 1915** Felix Kretschmann, another Herrmann nephew, legally changed his name to Felix Herrmann when he became a magician. By combining the then-standard Herrmann goatee and mustache with a devilish cape and hood, Felix became the human embodiment of Satan himself onstage.

RIGHT: **ca. 1902** Leon Herrmann called his version of the classic levitation illusion Princess Mahomeda, and in it he featured his wife, Marie. The name and face on this poster could easily lead those unaware of the death of Alexander Herrmann six years earlier to believe that this advertisement was for Leon's famous uncle Alexander.


HERRMANN
THE GREAT
The Metropolitan Printing Co N.Y.
THE PRINCESS MAHOMEDA.

BELOW: **ca. 1904** At this time it was not uncommon for a magician to boast about his expertise in the art of palming, although it was a sleight-of-hand technique that should have been kept secret. This spread from Leon Herrmann's souvenir program demonstrates how a billiard ball can be vanished. The series of images is suggestive of film, which was still in its infancy.


MOORE
No PHOTO
THE ART OF PALMING
Leon Herrmann



LEFT: **1899** Following her husband's death in 1896, Adelaide remained on the road, with Alexander's nephew Leon playing the role of Herrmann the Great. By the time this magnificent poster was printed, the Herrmann name was a well-established brand, and even though Alexander had been gone for three years, his image was still prominently featured at the top left corner.

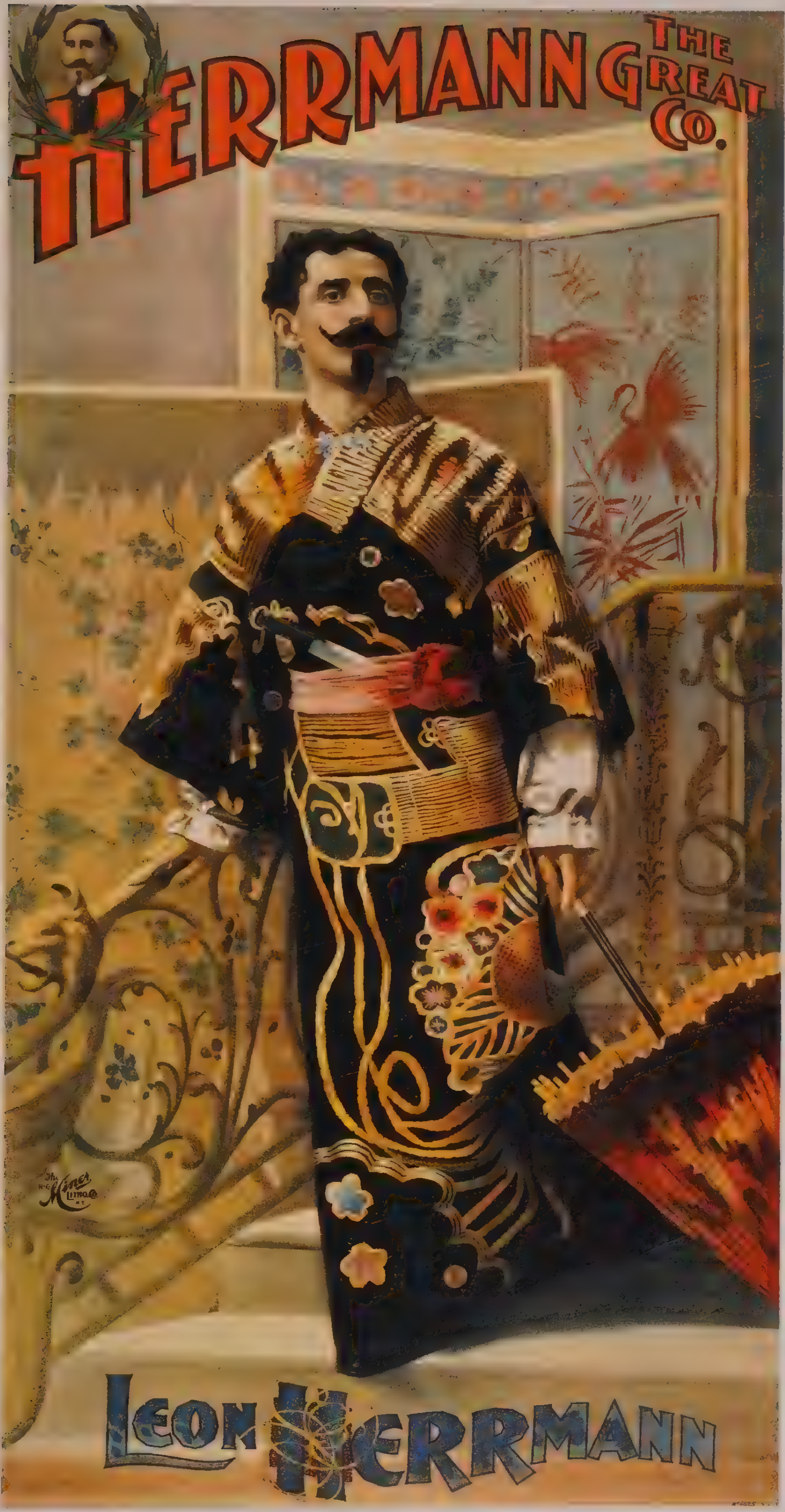
BELOW: **1897** Leon and Adelaide Herrmann pose in their exotic costumes for A Night in Japan, the closing act of their combined show. In an effort to stave off the ever-present competition, they built a spectacular show with lavish costumes and custom-painted scenery.

OPPOSITE: **1897** Outdoor advertising such as this beautiful Leon Herrmann poster, measuring nearly seven feet tall, was expensive to produce but necessary to any performer who wished to remain at the top of the entertainment field. These provocative images were essential to inducing the public to purchase tickets to a show.

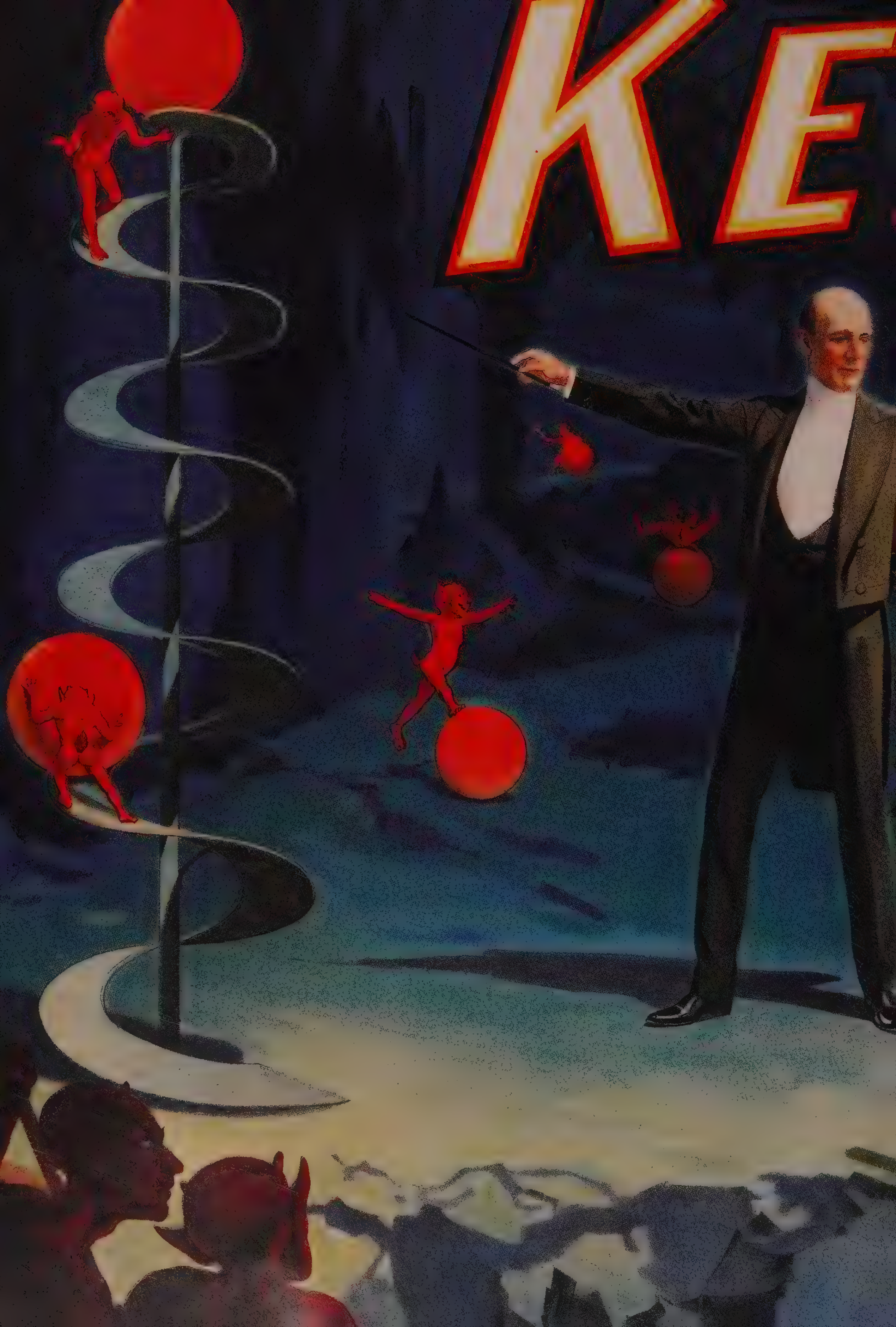
PAGES 276–277: **1902** A master of his craft, Harry Kellar was ready to become America's foremost magician when Alexander Herrmann died in 1896. Imaginative posters such as this one depicting an effect called the Golliwog Ball, produced by the renowned Strobridge Lithograph Company, would keep him at the top until his retirement in 1908.

The rift ended suddenly in 1896, when Alexander Herrmann died aboard his private train car, leaving Harry Kellar to carry on as the undisputed king of North American magicians. Considering the vast differences between these two great conjurers, it is unfortunate that they couldn't amicably share the expansive American territory. Onstage, Kellar was not the least bit funny, and he had no appreciable sleight-of-hand skills. Yet audiences treated him like a favorite uncle who could spellbind them with his incredible illusions wrapped in exotic tales. The image of Kellar became so ingrained in the public's conscience that when L. Frank Baum was creating characters for his classic novel *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (1900), his wizard had an uncanny resemblance to the grandfatherly, balding Harry Kellar.

During the summer months, when theaters traditionally closed due to the heat, Kellar would travel to England in search of spectacular new mysteries to include in the next year's show. His search would usually begin and end at Maskelyne and Cooke's Egyptian Hall in London, where the great Kellar would assume the role of spectator and watch the latest illusions unfold before him. He would offer to purchase the rights to his favorite effects from the inventor, but, failing that, repeated viewings would allow his keen eye to unravel the secrets, which he would carry back to the United States in



HERRMANN THE GREAT CO.
The N.G. Miner Litho. Co. N.Y.
LEON HERRMANN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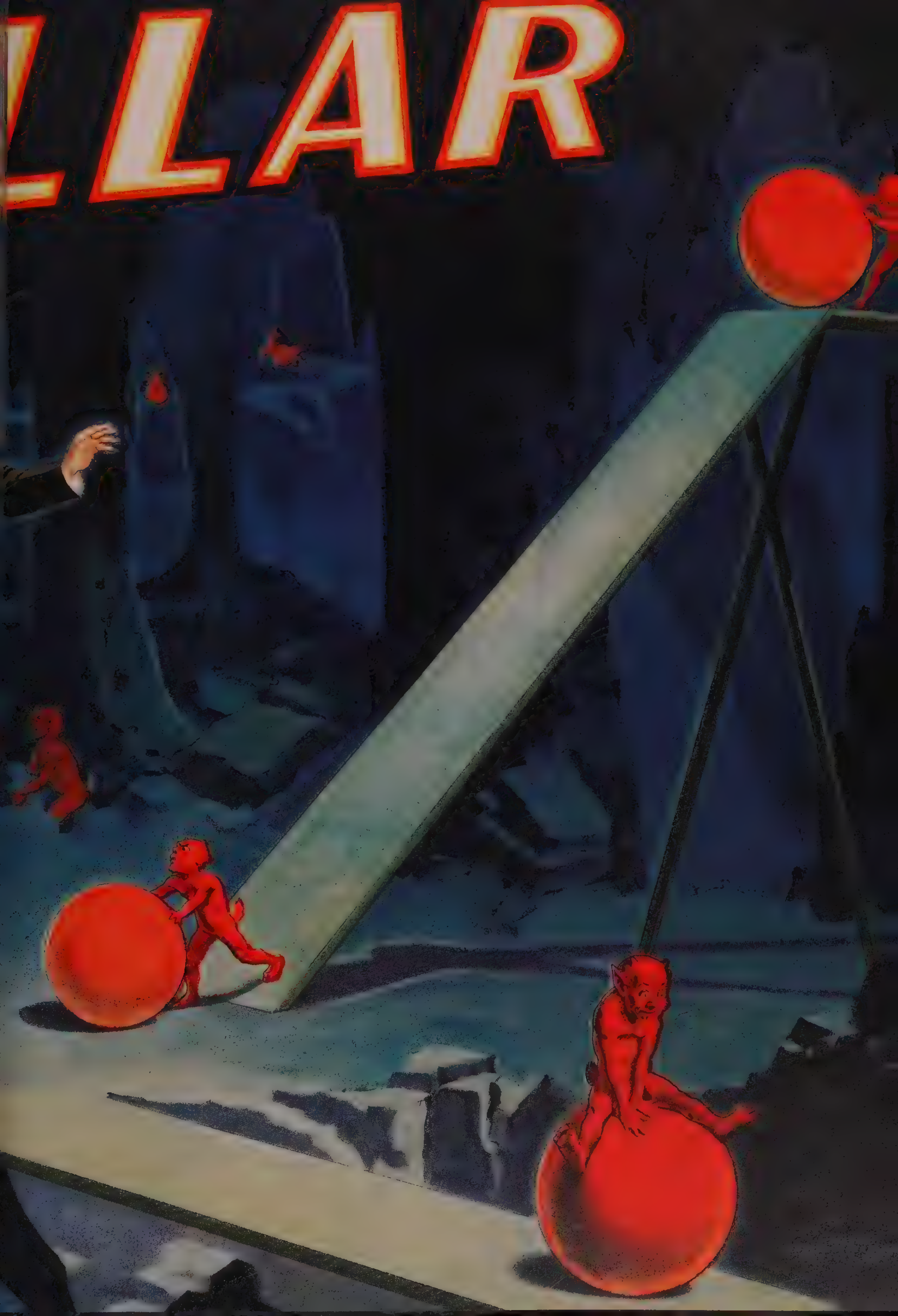
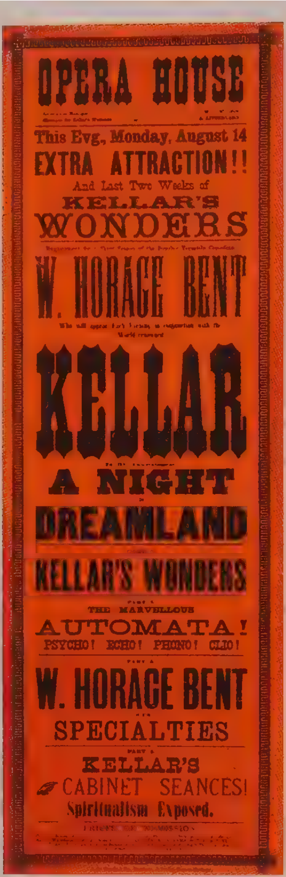

LLAR



OPERA HOUSE

This Evg., Monday, August 14

EXTRA ATTRACTION!!

And Last Two Weeks of

KELLAR'S

WONDERS

W. HORACE BENT

KELLAR

A NIGHT

DREAMLAND

KELLAR'S WONDERS

THE MARVELLOUS

AUTOMATA!

PSYCHO! ECHO! PHONO! CLIO!

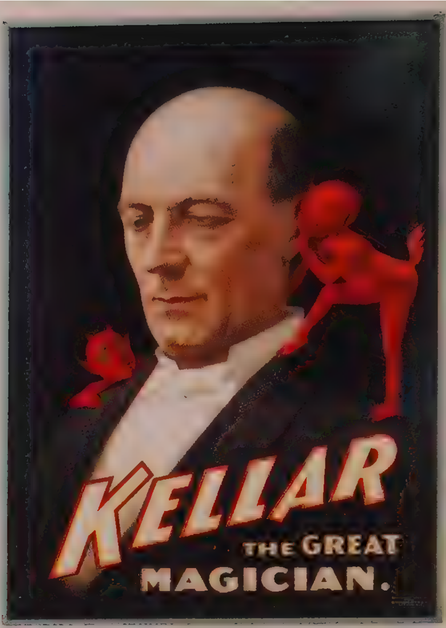
W. HORACE BENT

SPECIALTIES

KELLAR'S

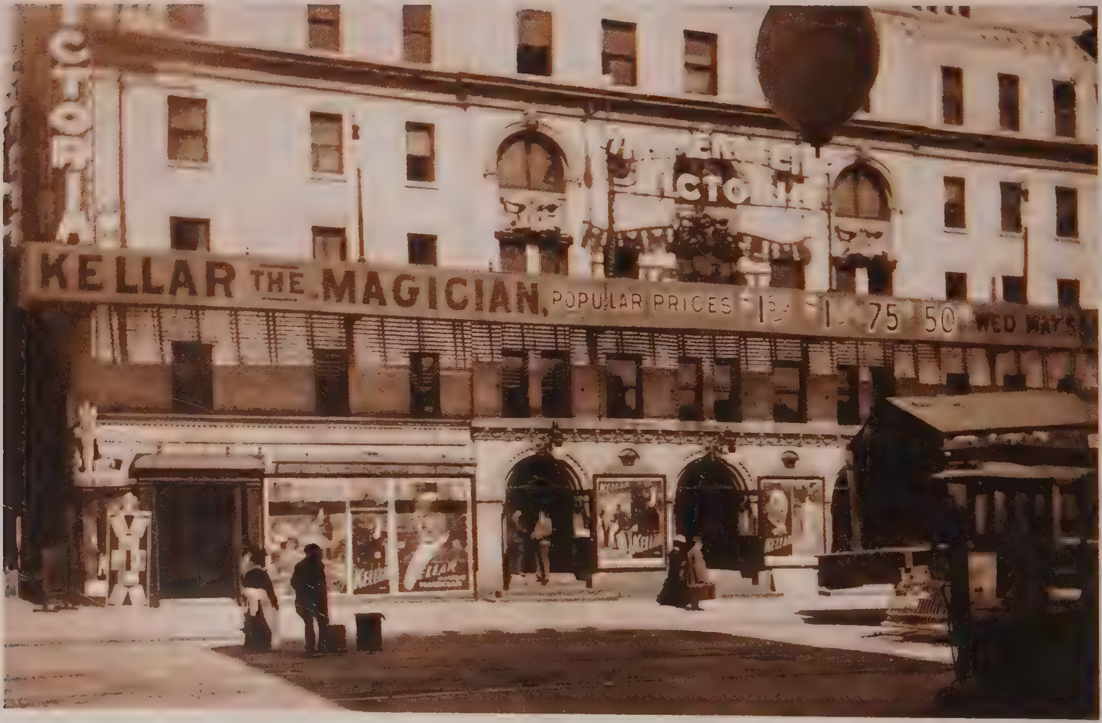
CABINET SEANCES!

Spiritualism Exposed.



LEFT: **1882** Life was far from easy during Kellar's early travels around the world, when his performances were advertised with inexpensive yet bold handbills. In a letter to his father, he once wrote, "In a wagon without springs, dragged by 18 bullocks, a man's anatomy, as well as his temper, is likely to reach a state of collapse."

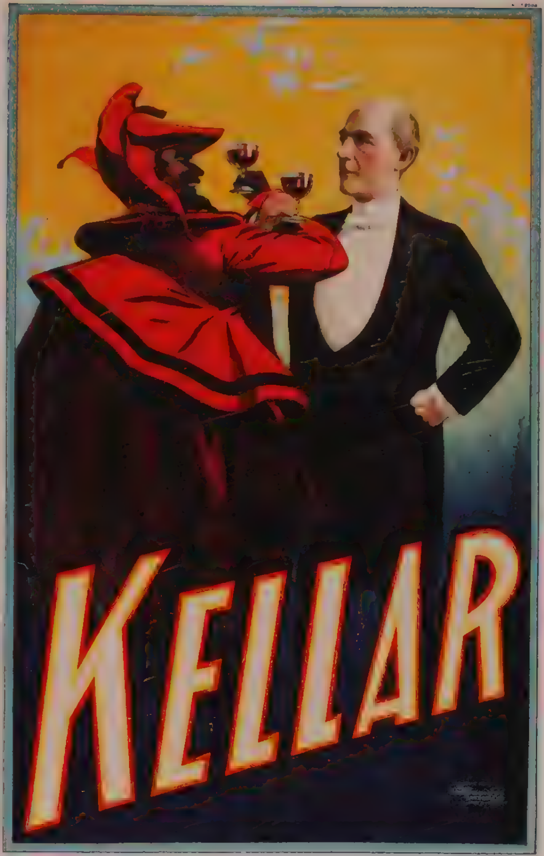
ABOVE: **1894** This is the iconic image of America's foremost illusionist of his time. For the first time ever, imps were portrayed whispering secrets into a magician's ear. For the next 100 years, magicians would copy this enticing idea, suggesting that devilish imps somehow aided their magical powers.

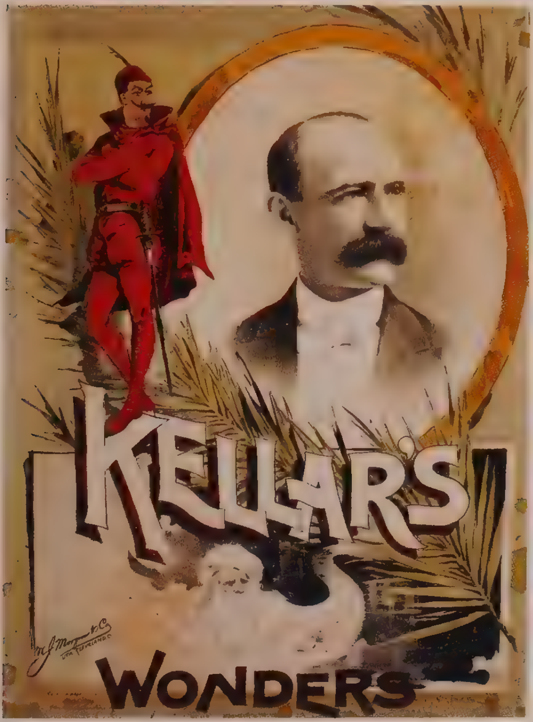


OPPOSITE BOTTOM: **1907** An impressive display of Kellar posters decorates the front of Hammerstein's Victoria Theatre at Broadway and 42nd Street in New York City. The people on the sidewalk are dwarfed by these nine-foot-tall advertisements, which are impossible to ignore.

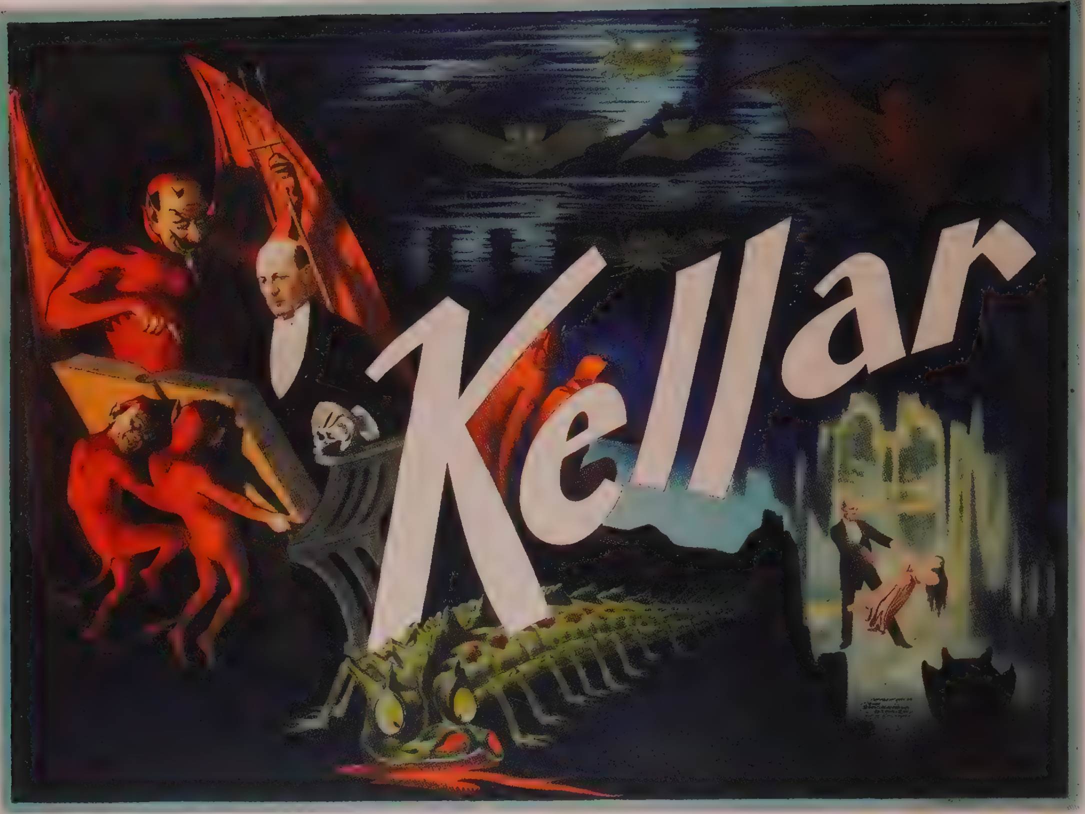
RIGHT: **1899** In many of Kellar's posters, the Devil, or one of his cohorts, is lurking nearby, ready to provide assistance. This image, however, cannot be considered even remotely subtle. Kellar and the Devil are seen toasting one another, cementing a partnership that is dedicated to the creation of modern miracles. Of course Kellar's magic was all produced by physical means, but this image of him toasting the Devil provoked strong emotions nonetheless.

BELOW: **1888** When a theatrical director suggested that Kellar's bushy mustache muffled his words, he promptly shaved and remained clean-shaven for the remainder of his career. The bearded figure is William Ellsworth Robinson, Kellar's chief assistant and mechanic, in costume. Robinson would later achieve fame as Chung Ling Soo, the Marvelous Chinese Conjurer.





his notebook. Once home, Kellar would have the apparatus constructed and tested in time for the following season. The roots of some of Kellar's most famous illusions—including the Levitation of Princess Karnac (regarded by experts as the greatest of the floating-lady illusions; pp. 67 and 284); the Golden Butterfly (wherein a woman dressed in a silken butterfly costume suddenly vanishes; p. 286); and *Will, the Witch, and the Enchanted Monkey* (a magical playlet with various characters vanishing, reappearing, and changing places)—can all be traced back to London. During one trip, Kellar lured Paul Valadon, a valuable member of Maskelyne's company, back to the United States with the promise of permanent employment knowing that, besides being a skilled magician, Valadon was privy to many of Maskelyne's guarded secrets. Such aggressive business practices allowed Kellar to maintain his lofty position as North America's top illusionist. For three years, Valadon appeared as a supporting act in Kellar's show, and he was even introduced to audiences as Kellar's successor. But behind the scenes, personality conflicts between Valadon and Mrs. Kellar had deteriorated into a wide schism, fueled on both parts by the taste for alcohol. In 1907, Kellar shocked the magic world with a stunning announcement: Howard Thurston, not Valadon, would be his successor.



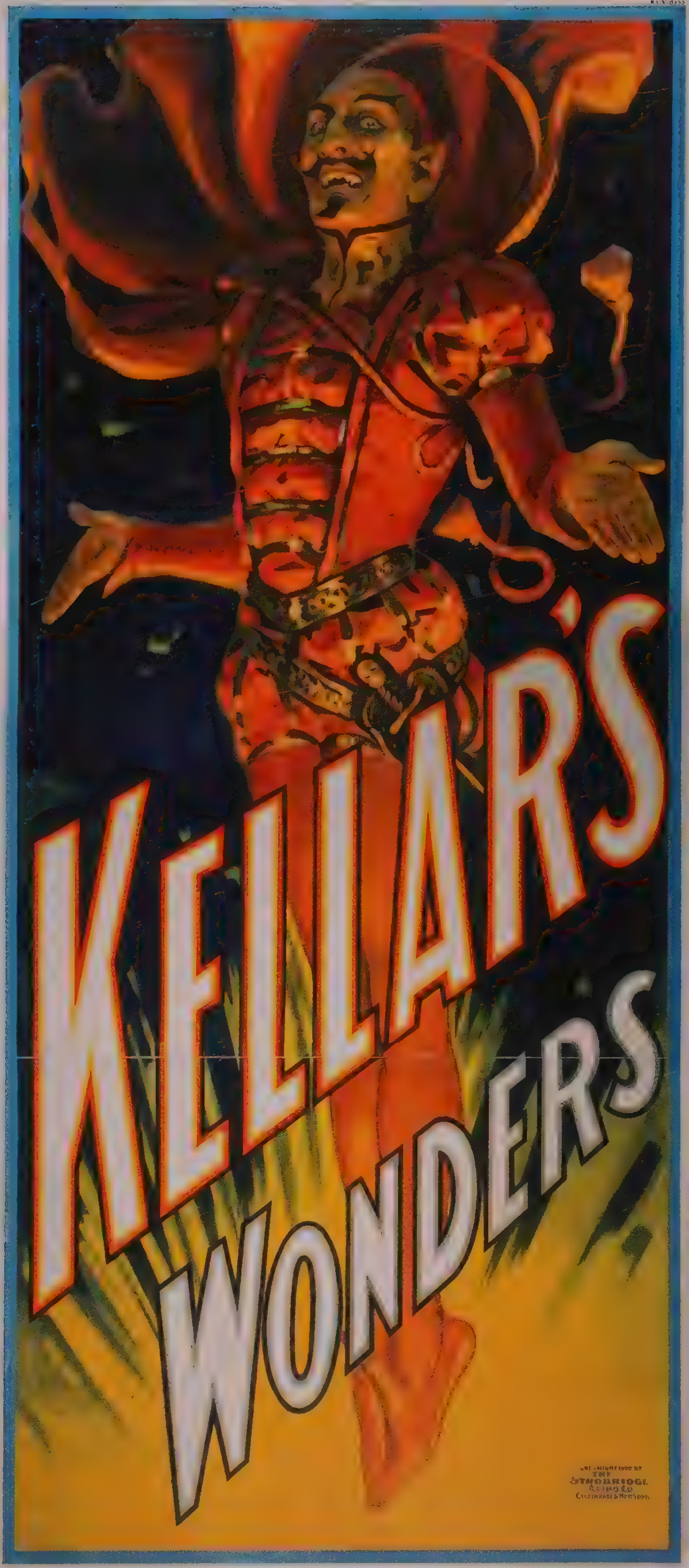
Thurston Leads the Next Generation

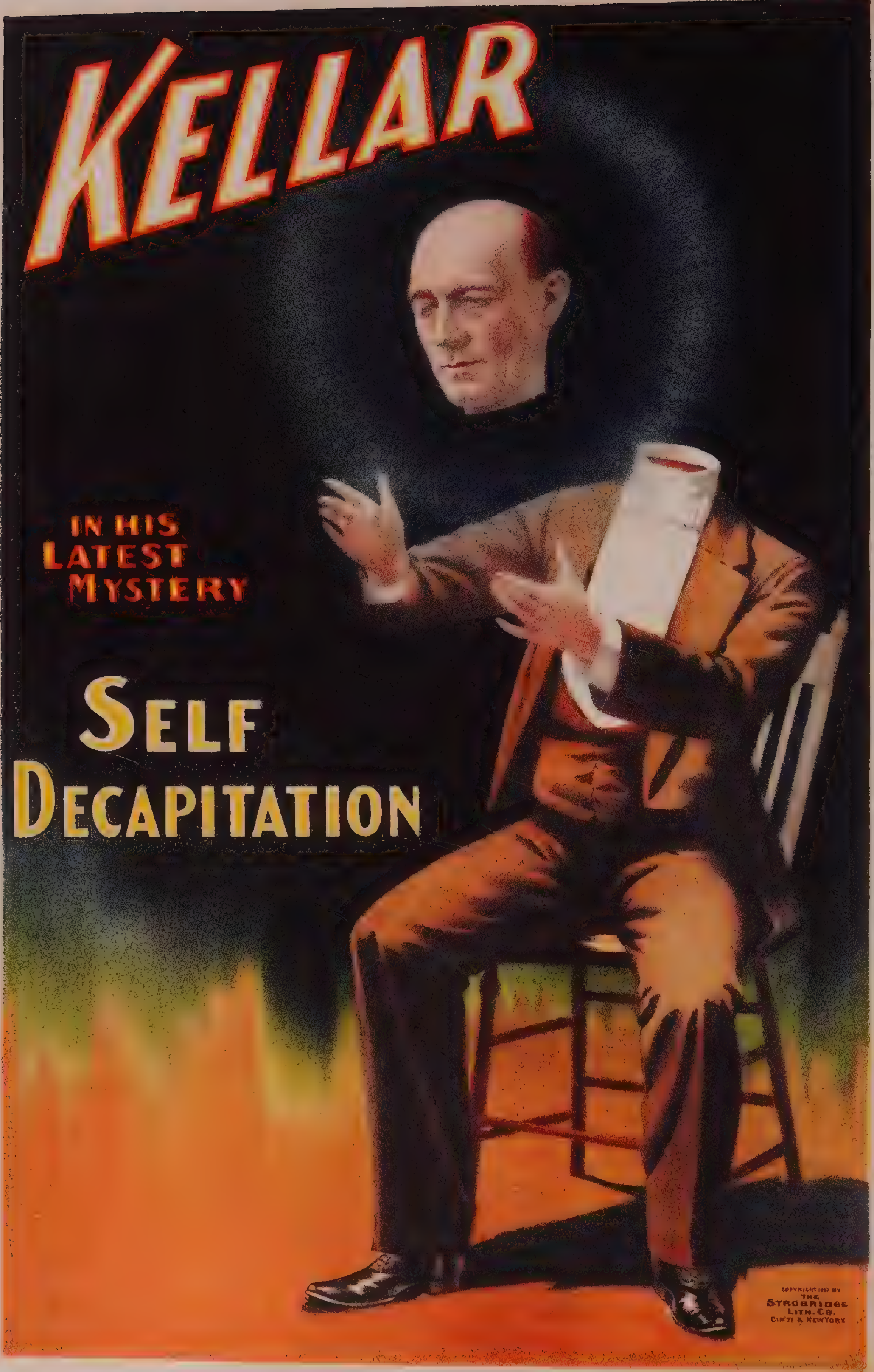
As a young man growing up in Columbus, Ohio, Thurston considered becoming a minister, but, after witnessing a performance by the great Alexander Herrmann, his mind was changed forever. When the 38-year old Thurston returned to America from his own world tour, he had matured from being the King of Cards, as he had billed himself, to being a skilled illusionist capable of presenting a three-hour show. Kellar was familiar with Thurston's success during this two-and-a-half-year tour, having read numerous reports in the various magic magazines. Upon Thurston's return in May 1907, the two great magicians met for dinner. One can readily imagine what was discussed. Both men were well aware of the difficulties that lay ahead for Thurston in his attempt to establish his show in America. This daunting task was dramatically simplified when Kellar announced that Thurston would be his successor. During 1908, the final season of Kellar's illustrious career, the two wizards shared the stage, each presenting half of the evening's entertainment. A magnificent poster from this season depicts Kellar placing a cape over Thurston's shoulders, signifying his passing the mantle of magic (p. 289). In reality there was no sacred cape, but the message was clear: Kellar, the master of his craft, was

RIGHT: **1900** This poster and the one at the opposite page represent Kellar when he was the number one magician in America at the height of magic's golden age. He had come a long way since the day in August 1875 when the ship that was carrying his show struck a rock and sank off the coast of Spain. He escaped with his life but lost everything he owned, including a chest of gold and silver coins he had earned in South America.

OPPOSITE TOP: **1897** This intriguing image contains everything that Kellar felt was important to a successful lithograph. At left he consults a metaphorical book of knowledge with the Devil. At right is his most famous illusion, the Levitation of Princess Karnac. The fire-breathing centipede and winged creatures promise a trip to a foreign world.

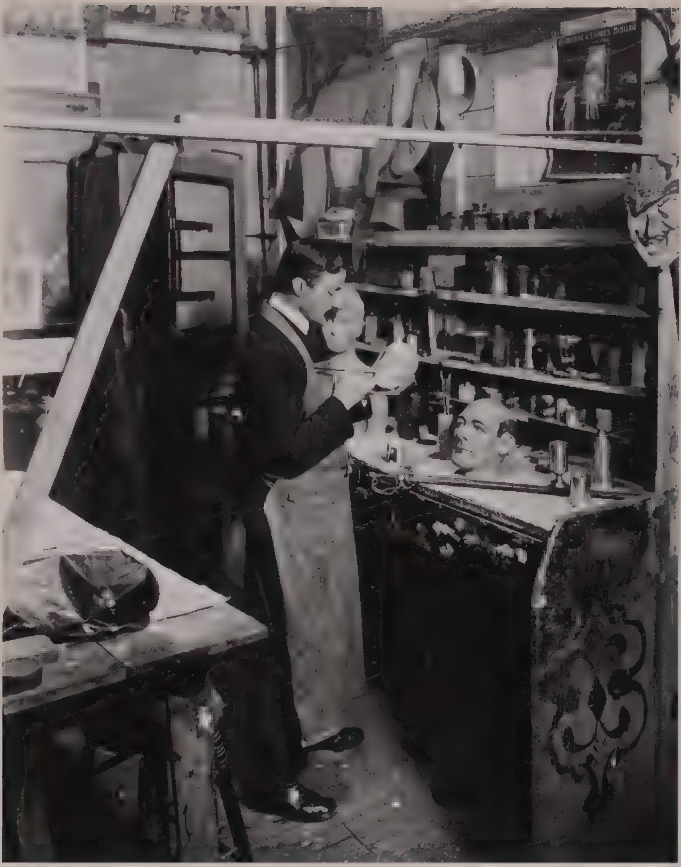
OPPOSITE BOTTOM: **ca. 1892** This grandfatherly, clean-shaven Midwesterner with penetrating blue eyes became America's number one magician during the 1890s. It is widely believed that when L. Frank Baum was writing *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, he based the wizard character largely on the image of Harry Kellar.




KELLAR
IN HIS LATEST MYSTERY
SELF DECAPITATION
COPYRIGHT 1897 BY THE STROBRIDGE LITH. CO. CIN'TI & NEW YORK

OPPOSITE: 1897 Imagine the effect this illusion had on audiences more than 100 years ago. Spectators watched incredulously as Kellar's head left his body, floated across the stage, and then returned to its proper place atop his shoulders. How could they not believe that Mr. Kellar was in league with the Devil?

RIGHT: 1897 The less glamorous side of magic is depicted in this photo of a workman at the famous Martinka Magic Company in New York City. On his workbench rests the papier-mâché head of Harry Kellar, which will soon be thrilling audiences during his spectacular Self Decapitation illusion, opposite.



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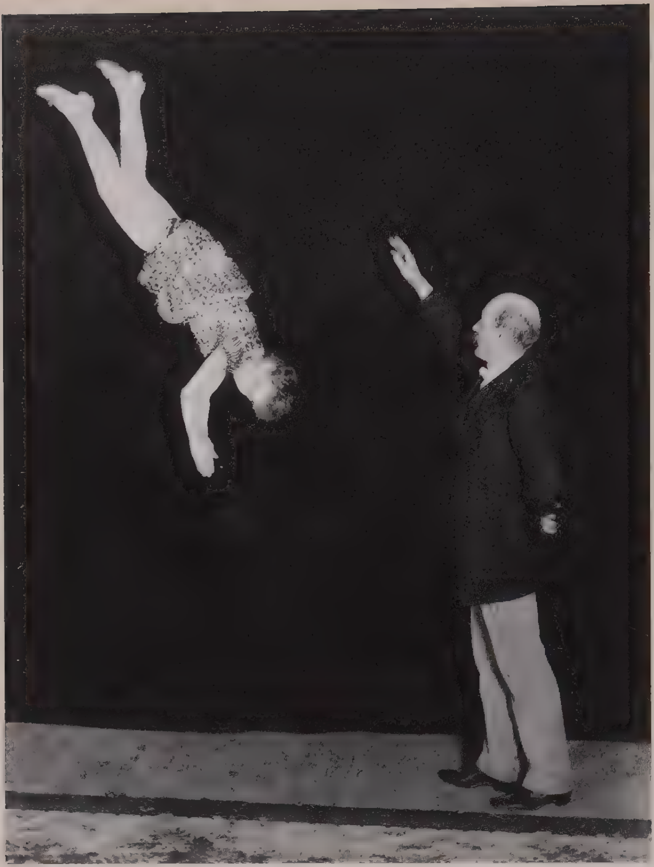
handing his beloved art over to the next generation. The poster states, "Thurston will be the greatest magician the world has ever known"; and in time, Thurston would prove this claim to be true.

The Largest & Most Modern Magic Show

Kellar's passing of the mantle to Thurston was portrayed in their publicity as a noble deed. But in fact, it was strictly business. For a tidy sum of money, Thurston gained ownership of all of the dozens of effects in Kellar's show. The irony is, however, that only two of Kellar's illusions made their way into Thurston's repertoire: the Spirit Cabinet and the Levitation of Princess Karnac. More important to Thurston than acquiring Kellar's tricks was acquiring the title of successor, and the right to perform in the prime theaters that comprised Kellar's established territory. Thurston's ultimate ambition was to present the largest and most modern magic show ever seen in America (p. 291).

By the 1920s, Thurston's show had grown to gigantic proportions, and included numerous classic illusions such as the Indian Rope Trick, wherein one end of a thick piece of rope rose into the air, and a young boy clad in traditional Indian costume scurried to the top and vanished in a puff of smoke (p. 299). Sawing a Lady in Half became magic's most popular illusion during the Roaring Twenties, and Thurston's spine-tingling and hilarious routine made it a perpetual favorite in his show. With spectators from the audience holding onto the woman's hands and feet, a giant crosscut saw ripped through the wooden box that contained her. A steady stream of comical touches transformed what could have been a horrifying ordeal into a lighthearted romp. Other illusions were created for the purpose of filling the stage with spectacle. A Willys-Overland Whippet automobile rolled onto the stage carrying a bevy of beautiful girls; suddenly, behind the ubiquitous puff of smoke, the car and all of its passengers miraculously disappeared (p. 302). During the Mystery of the Water Fountains, a thin stream of water spouted from the magician's wand. The magician touched the wand to an onstage fan, and the fan began sending out a stream of water. In the same way, another stream erupted from the edge of a sword, and still another from the top of an assistant's head. Everything Thurston touched instantly erupted into a stream of water. By the end of the routine, the entire stage had been transformed into a dazzling display of water, glistening like diamonds under the lights.

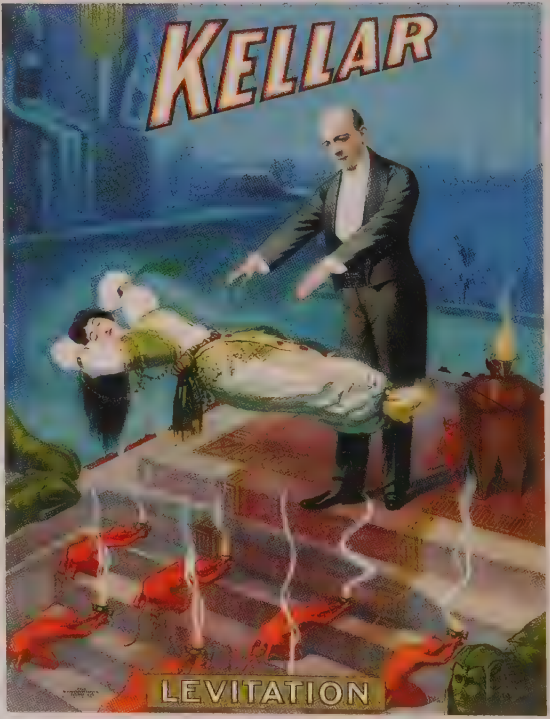


LEFT: **1889** During Harry Kellar's long career the limitations of photography made it difficult to capture images of a live performance. In this rare photo of his illusion called Astarte (the same illusion that Herrmann called Maid of the Moon, page 270), Kellar levitates Dot Robinson (ironically, the same woman who at one time performed the effect in Herrmann's show).

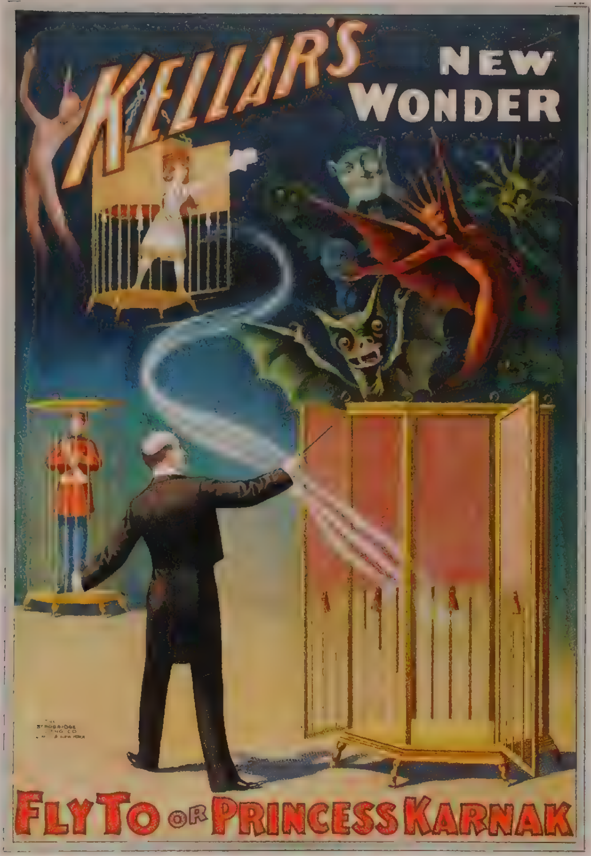
BELOW: **1900** This dramatic poster features America's most famous magician performing his most incomprehensible illusion: the Levitation of Princess Karnac. An object floating in midair is one of the few effects that can be effectively depicted in print—resulting in a perfect piece of advertising.

Another perennial feature of Thurston's show was his mastery of sleight of hand with playing cards. He was one of the first conjurers to pluck cards out of thin air. Thurston also distributed specially printed souvenir cards bearing his portrait on one side and an advertisement on the other (p. 290). These were hurled—one at a time, with pinpoint accuracy—into the outstretched hands of eager spectators seated in the farthest corners of the theater. It was an impressive feat, and it kept Thurston's name in the audience's mind long after they had left the theater.

Kellar, meanwhile, had retired to a beautiful home in Los Angeles, California, but he still looked forward to hearing from—and offering advice to—his ambitious protégé, who was enjoying the greatest success of his career. In a letter from 1921, Kellar offered Thurston these fatherly words: "I was greatly pleased to hear from you and above all, to learn that your business is so very good. I always felt sure that you would win. Now take a word of kindly advice from your old friend Kellar, don't let anyone lead you to invest your money in schemes that promise big returns on paper... Don't dabble in anything outside of your show." Sound advice, to be sure, but Thurston spent most of his life ignoring it. Investments in Florida orange groves, health food schemes, gold mines,



RIGHT: 1895 The Flyto Cages were the creation of Austrian illusionist Ernest Thorn. In the effect, a woman would disappear from one cage and "fly to" a second cage suspended in the air. Eventually the fictitious name Princess Karnak, as seen on this poster, was altered to Karnac and became famous as the subject of Kellar's legendary levitation illusion, opposite page bottom.



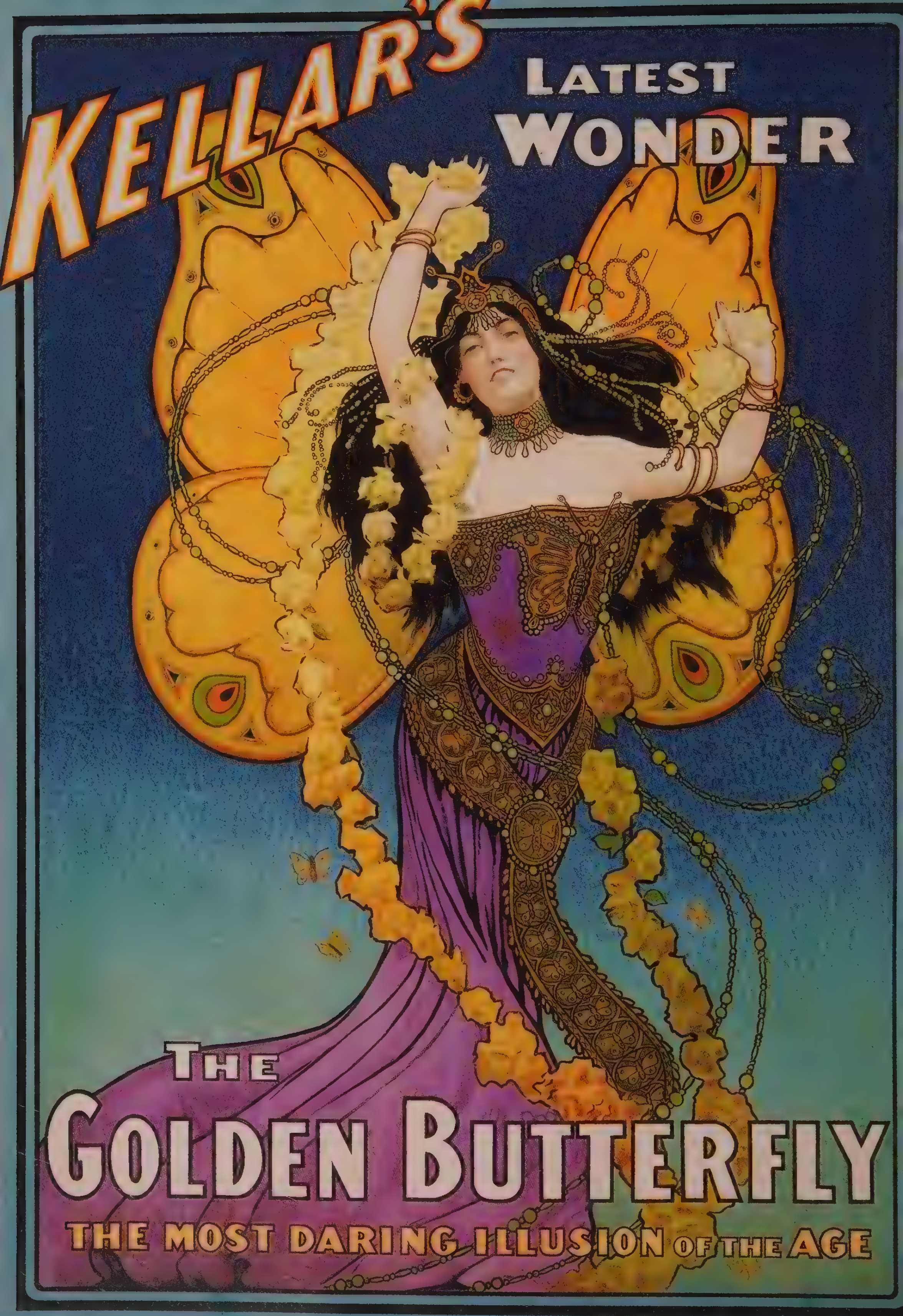
and anti-snoring devices reduced his fortune, once reported to be worth $5 million, to less than $10,000 by the time of his death. Even a man famous around the world for creating miracles onstage was not immune to risky quick-buck schemes.

Each new season, Thurston would depart from his home in Beechhurst, New York, and embark on another tour, primarily through the densely populated eastern and midwestern states. Every year, new, innovative routines and illusions were required to keep the show fresh and attract audiences new and old. In Chicago, Thurston discovered a Danish-born magician named Harry Jansen, who was a creative thinker, a master builder, and a brilliant performer. In 1921, Jansen was hired to create and build new magical effects in Thurston's workshop. It was a job for which he was perfectly suited, but Jansen's tremendous ambition prevented him from remaining behind the scenes. Jansen had already tasted success as a magician during a world tour, and his goal was to continue his ascent to the top of magic's global stage. After two years in Thurston's employ, the logical step was for Thurston to finance the construction of a new show for Jansen and sponsor his tour, thus turning a potential rival into a business partner. The advantages were twofold: first, creative-minded Jansen could develop new routines that could then be duplicated for Thurston's show, and secondly, a percentage of Jansen's profits would be returned to his benefactor. Taking the stage name Dante, Jansen set off across America.

Next in Line: The Brilliant Young Dante

Dante's posters from this period, beginning in 1923, prominently featured the images of both Kellar and Thurston, with text that read, "Thurston presents Dante in Thurston-Kellar Mysteries." (p. 308). Here, the mantle of magic has been passed yet again, this time from Thurston to Dante. In the eyes of the public, it was nothing more than an established master recognizing a brilliant young talent; in reality, it was another shrewd business arrangement designed to benefit both parties. It was a plan that had worked before, and there was no reason to believe that it wouldn't work again.

Dante succeeded in creating a steady stream of audience-pleasing magical routines. But Thurston was clever. With an eye toward protecting his own route, he sent his protégé into untested locations in the western states. Oftentimes, Dante had to make due with one- or two-day engagements followed by long jumps between

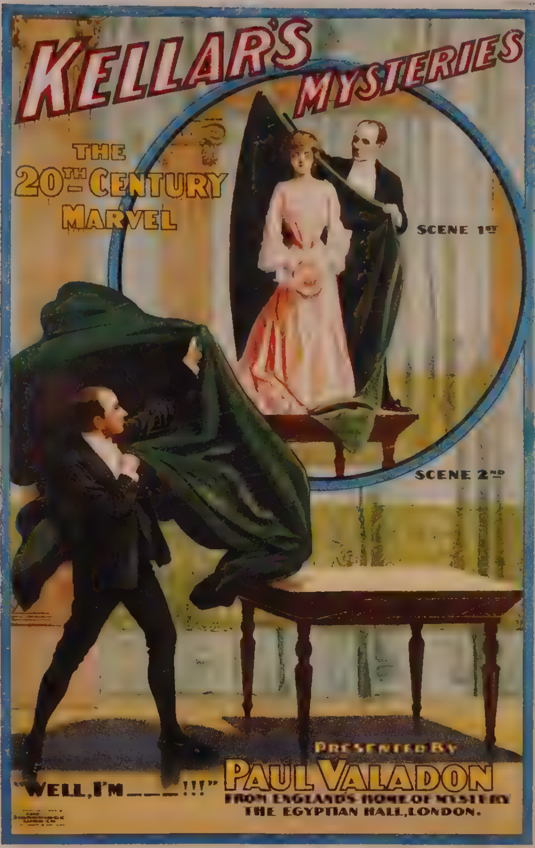

KELLAR'S
LATEST
WONDER
THE
GOLDEN BUTTERFLY
THE MOST DARING ILLUSION OF THE AGE

COPYRIGHT 1906 BY THE STROBRIDGE LITHO CO. CINCINNATI & NEW YORK

OPPOSITE: **1906** Even though Kellar performed up to 10 shows per week, he still spent every day in the theater perfecting his new illusions. In November 1906, it was the Golden Butterfly, as reported by the *Milwaukee Free Press*: "Day in and day out, Herr Valadon {his new costar} and I are working on this new mystery. It has cost me more than one thousand dollars so far and months of study and experimenting. Still it is far from being what we want it to be."

RIGHT: **1904** As part of the unending battle to maintain his status as America's top magician, Harry Kellar convinced the versatile Paul Valadon to give up his steady employment at London's famed Egyptian Hall and accompany him to America. Valadon brought with him a startling illusion of his own creation called "Well, I'm...!!!" in which Mrs. Valadon suddenly vanished from atop a table.

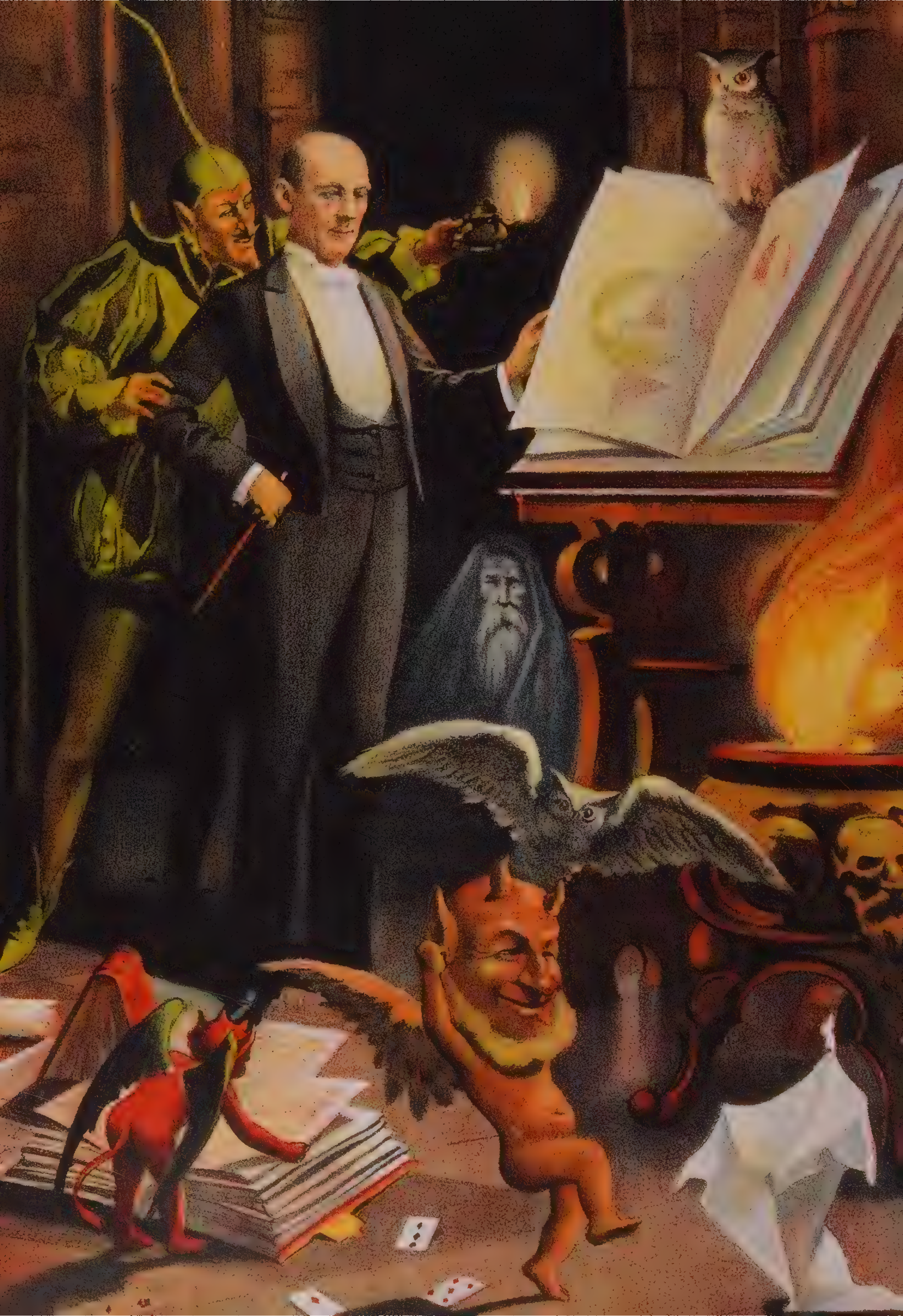
BELOW: **ca. 1887** Miss Eva Lydia Medley was playing cornet in an Australian music hall before she became Mrs. Harry Kellar. Soon she was costar of the Kellar show, with featured roles in illusions such as the Golden Butterfly and an impressive demonstration of mind reading and lightning calculations called Karmos.

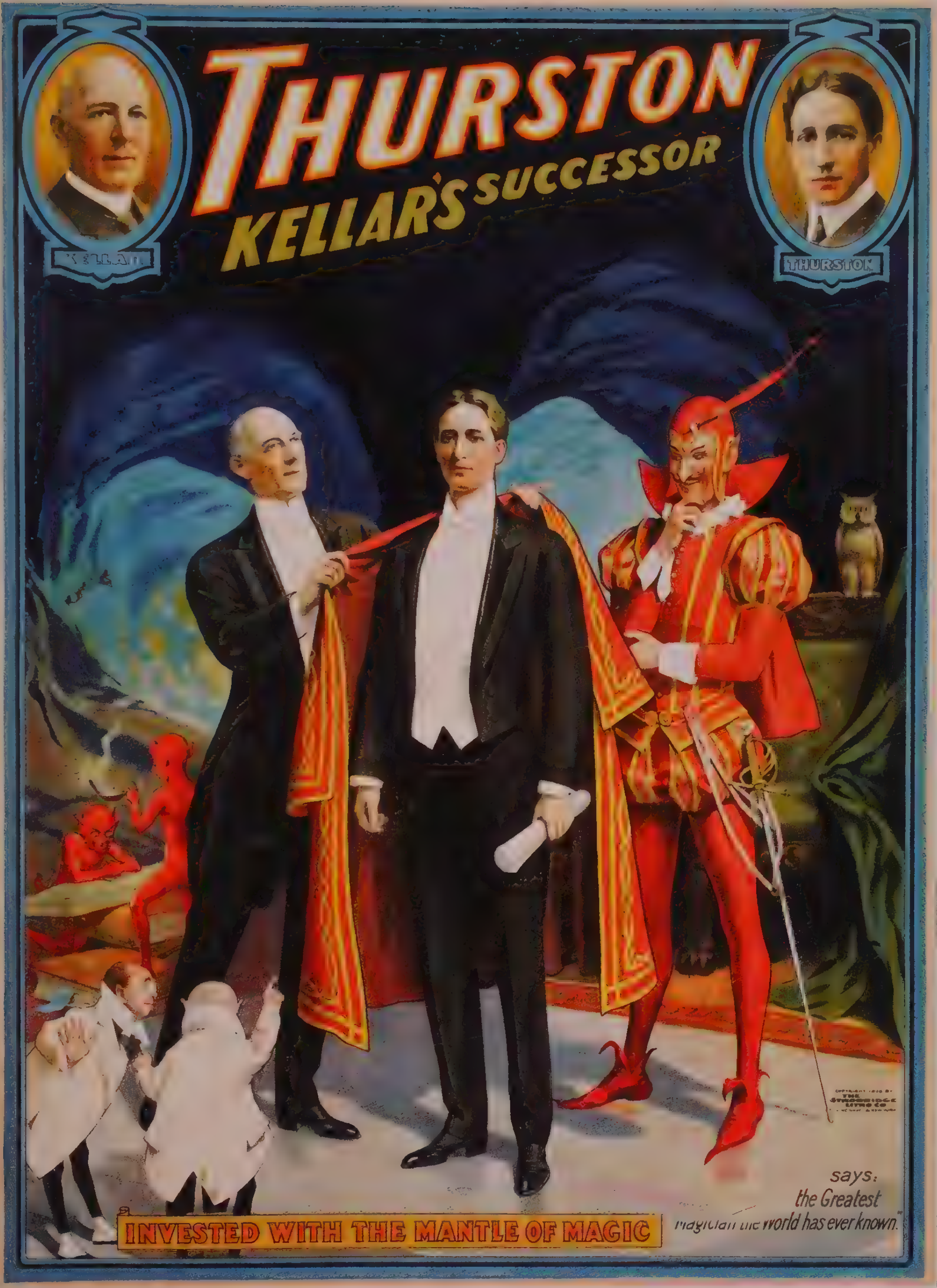


dates, a situation that made regular payments to Thurston a struggle. Undeterred, Thurston was still convinced that having another magician appear under his auspices was a sound business plan.

Raymond Sugden, a young magician from Lawrenceville, Pennsylvania, made a strong impression on Thurston by offering some valuable suggestions for one of his new illusions. In 1925, Thurston offered to produce a show for Sugden, and, like Dante, Sugden recognized the value in having Thurston's name appear on theater marquees alongside his own. Calling himself Tampa, "England's Court Magician" (even though he had never crossed the Atlantic), Sugden amended his advertising to read, "Thurston Presents Tampa" (p. 473).

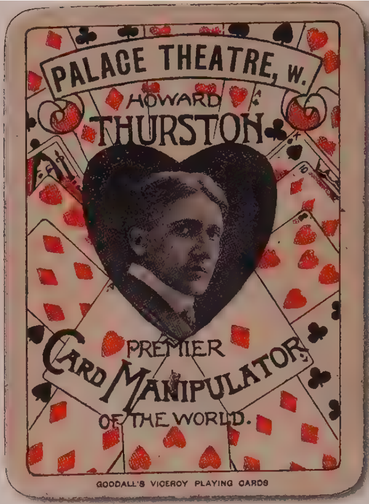
Tampa was a polished performer, and for the next two years, he, Thurston, and Dante crisscrossed America, presenting many of the same tricks. As theaters slowly began to replace live entertainment with films, the three illusionists—along with every other act in show business—found themselves vying for fewer and fewer venues. Dante eventually realized that, with a whole world out there waiting to be tapped, both he and Thurston would be better served if he set sail for foreign lands. In 1927, Dante embarked on a global tour that would continue




THURSTON
KELLAR'S SUCCESSOR
KELLAR
THURSTON
THE STROBRIDGE LITHO CO
INVESTED WITH THE MANTLE OF MAGIC
says:
the Greatest
magician the world has ever known."

OPPOSITE: 1894 Kellar promised to lead audiences into a world unlike anything they had ever witnessed, a world where elves and gremlins and spooks and the Devil himself helped the magician accomplish the impossible. Kellar's unbridled success serves as proof that audiences found these posters, of which this is a detail, irresistible.

ABOVE: 1908 The event depicted in this lithograph qualifies it as the most historically important magic poster ever produced in America. Harry Kellar is seen passing the symbolic mantle of magic to the confident, young Howard Thurston. Kellar stated, "Thurston will become the greatest magician the world has ever known."



ABOVE: **1900** This souvenir card was printed for Thurston's extended engagement at London's Palace Theatre. Thurston hurled the cards into the hands of spectators seated in the farthest corners of the theater. This feat kept his name in spectators' minds long after they had left the theater.

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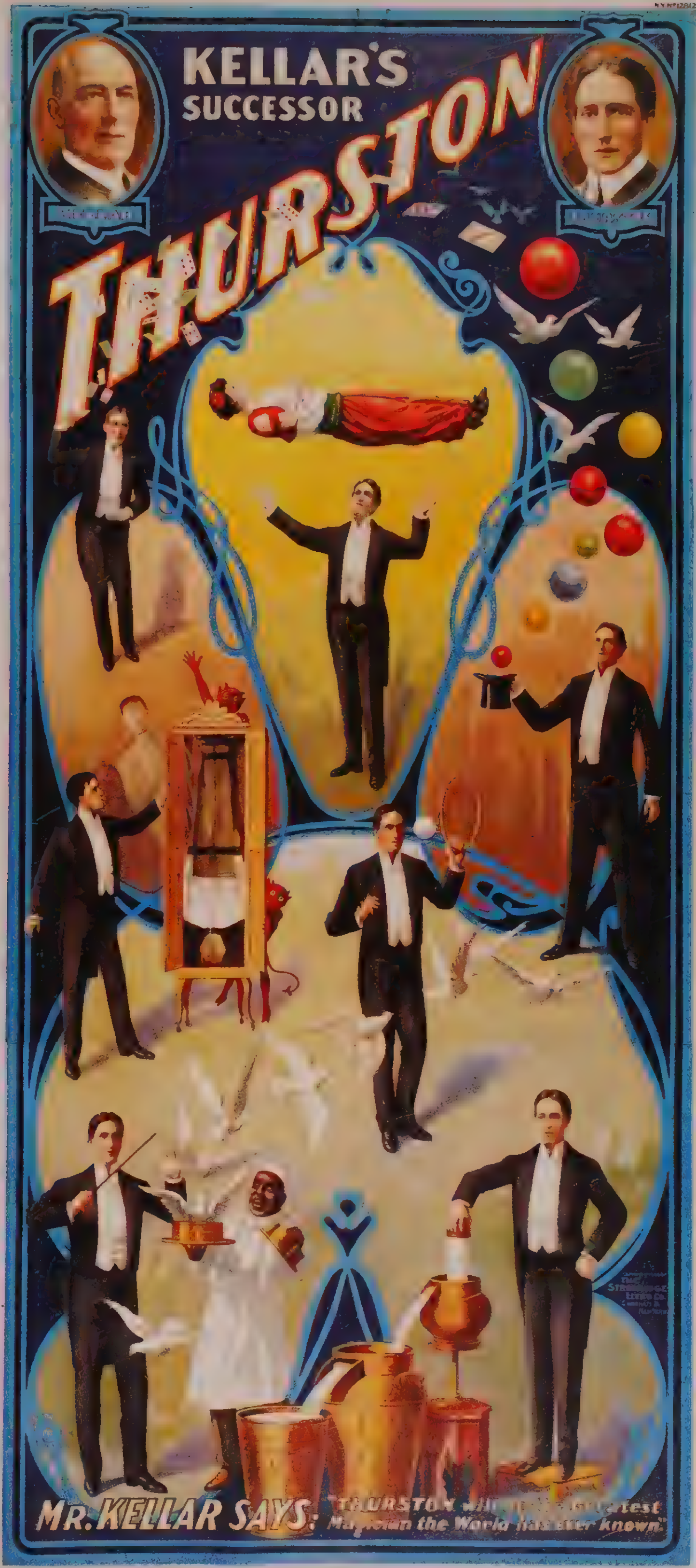
nonstop for more than a decade. His show, *Sim Sala Bim* (nonsensical words from a Danish song he recalled from his youth), matured into a unique kind of entertainment—a cross between a revue show and a magical extravaganza (p. 309). Illusions were incorporated into magical sketches that took place in front of elaborately painted backdrops, with beautiful costumes and original music. None of these elements were brand new to a magic show, but no one had combined them more effectively than Dante.

Thousands of performances had honed *Sim Sala Bim* into a finely tuned machine. Every word, move, costume, light, and magical effect had been polished to perfection. By the time it reached London, in August 1936, the Dante show was as nearly perfect as a magic show could be. Regardless of what theater patrons were looking for, whether it was comedy, thrills, beautiful girls, spectacle, or pure artistry, Dante's show could deliver it all. On August 13, 1936, London's *Evening News* reported, "For three solid hours [Dante] presides over a bewildering orgy of illusions, sleight of hand, tricks, apparitions, disappearances and spectacular manifestations. Dante is a superb showman ... His noble presence is overpowering."

OPPOSITE LEFT: **1902** This early photo was taken the year Thurston transformed himself from the King of Cards into a stage illusionist. Though he was still working in vaudeville, he now presented a number of spectacular stage illusions in the guise of an Indian prince, an exotic persona that contemporary audiences would have found most intriguing.

RIGHT: **1908** This seven-foot poster was produced the year that Thurston became Kellar's successor. Most of the illusions pictured are not from Kellar's repertoire. Thurston had replaced Kellar's illusions with these new and modern effects knowing that his future success was dependent on fresh ideas.


KELLAR'S
SUCCESSOR
THURSTON
MR. KELLAR SAYS: "THURSTON will be the Greatest Magician the World has ever known."
THE STROBRIDGE LITHO CO.

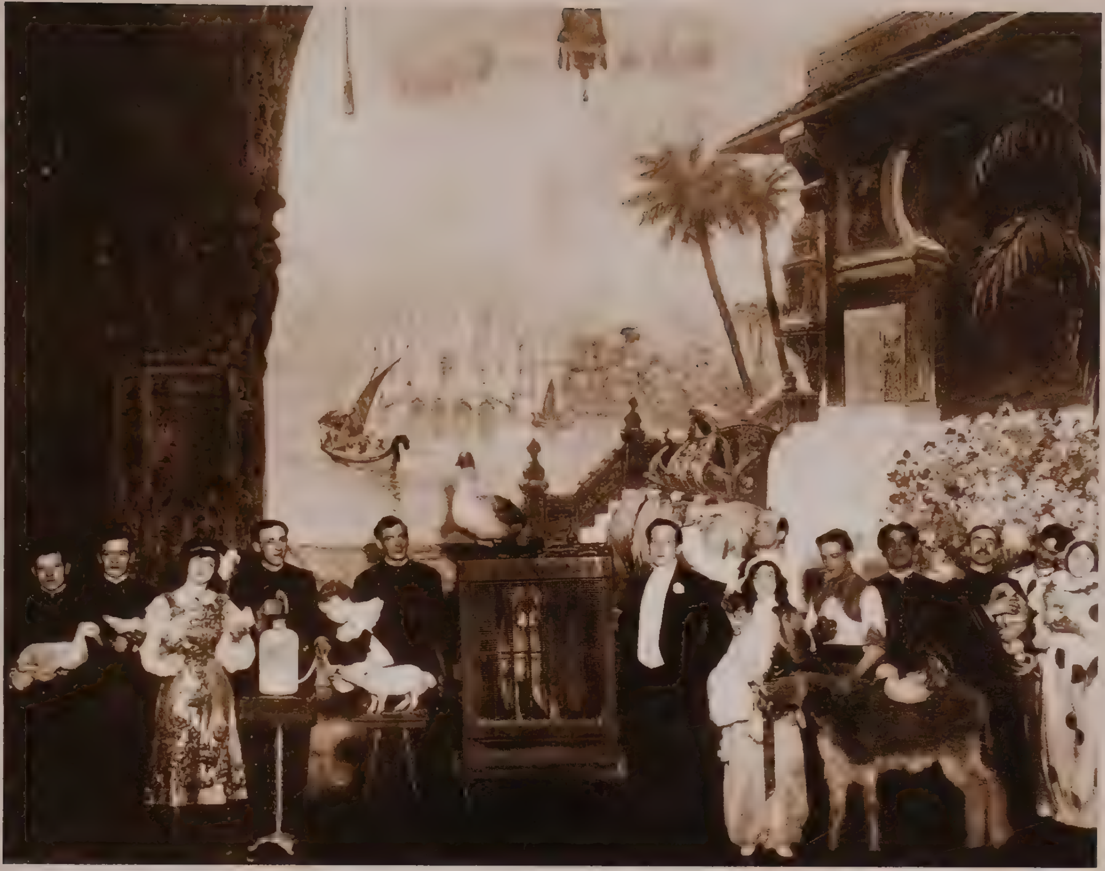
OPPOSITE CENTER: **1907** A few months before Thurston was named successor to Harry Kellar, he was completing an arduous world tour. In India audiences were plentiful, but suitable theaters were not, so he spent weeks entertaining enormous crowds in his own tent theater. The name THURSTON is visible painted across the big top erected here in Allahabad.

OPPOSITE BOTTOM: **1907** Every Western magician who ever visited India searched for a street performer who could perform the famous Indian Rope Trick in the open air. They all found plenty of snake charmers, but none witnessed a performance of this legendary illusion for the simple reason that it was an urban myth. Thurston is seen here posing with a group of Indian fakirs.

Survival of the Fittest

While Dante was enjoying the greatest success of his career and was booked solid for nearly three years in England alone, things back in America had not been going nearly as well. Tampa's growing success had begun to affect Thurston's business. Around the time of Dante's departure abroad, some theaters actually started requesting the younger, fresher Tampa show in place of yet another visit by the venerable Thurston. Whenever Tampa's route encroached on his boss's territory, Thurston started demanding that the engagement be canceled. Tampa was eventually forced to eliminate certain illusions from his repertoire that were also being featured in Thurston's show. These drastic measures certainly seemed counterproductive to a supposed partnership, but times were changing and show business opportunities were diminishing. For Howard Thurston, it was a matter of survival of the fittest.

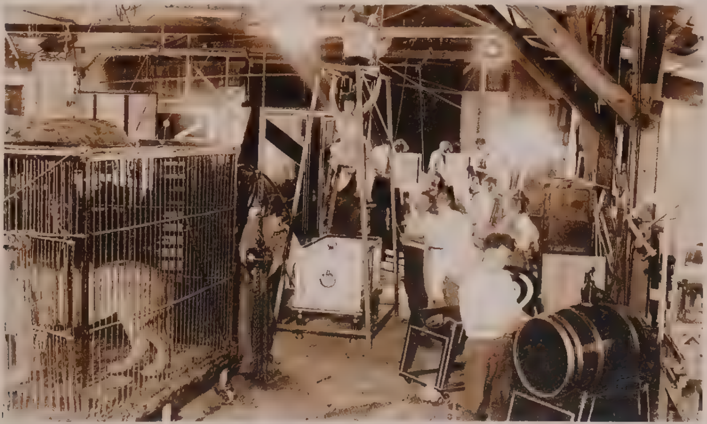
LEFT: **ca. 1900** A young Thurston poses with a live duck, his father, and his new nine-year-old assistant George White. White became so important to the show that Thurston refused to go onstage without him. Until Thurston's death in 1936, White would remain his most valued and trusted employee.

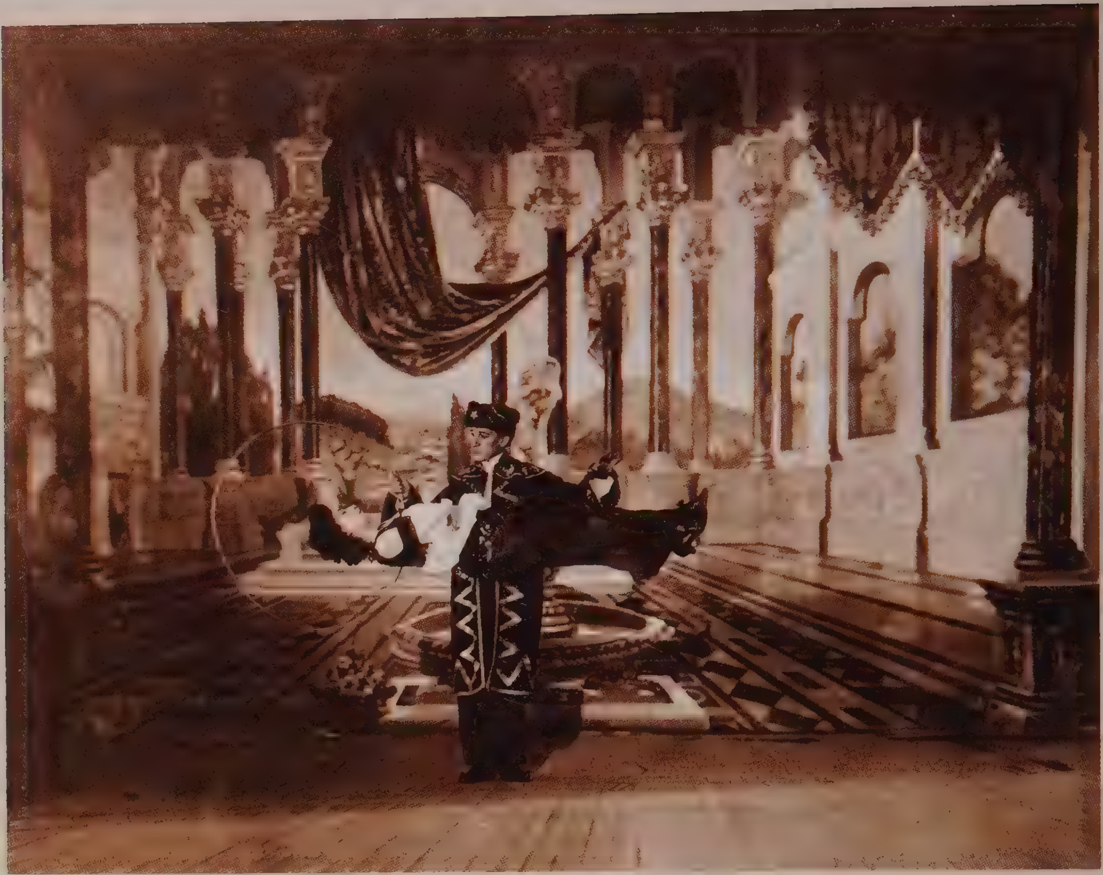


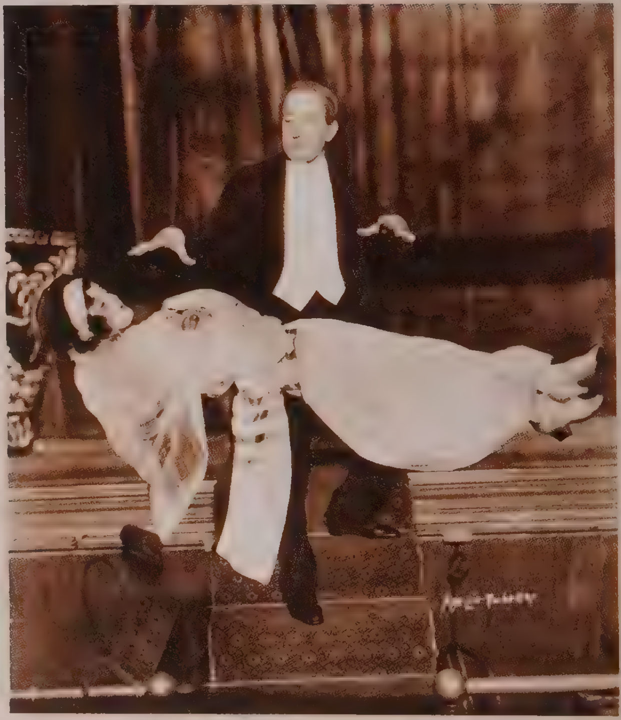
OPPOSITE TOP: **1912** To distinguish himself, Thurston created a show that was bigger than anything previously seen. Instead of magically producing one person from a cabinet, he produced nine. Never satisfied with reality, he posed this photograph to suggest that his entire cast had been concealed.

ABOVE: **ca. 1910** Thurston's early vaudeville act consisted of card manipulations and the production of a duck from a spectator's coat, opposite bottom. Eventually he created a full-evening show involving painted scenery, a large cast, and a menagerie including ducks, geese, pigeons, rabbits, a donkey, and a lion.

BELOW: **ca. 1925** Thurston's lion enjoyed his time off during the summer months when the theaters traditionally closed due to excessive heat. The assistants, however, kept Thurston's New York workshop in Beechhurst, Long Island, buzzing with activity, as old illusions were refurbished and new ones were designed, built, tested, and rebuilt.



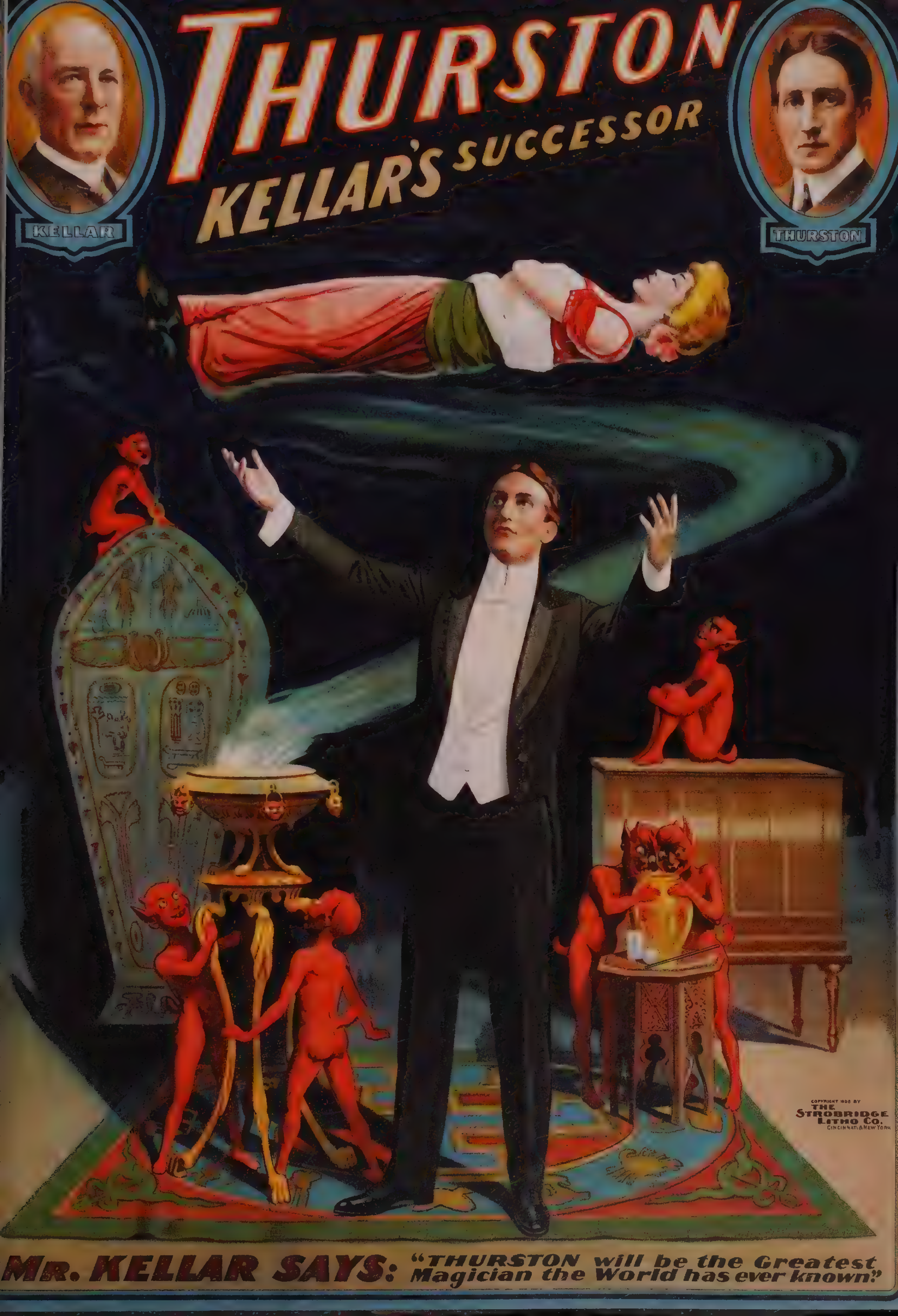


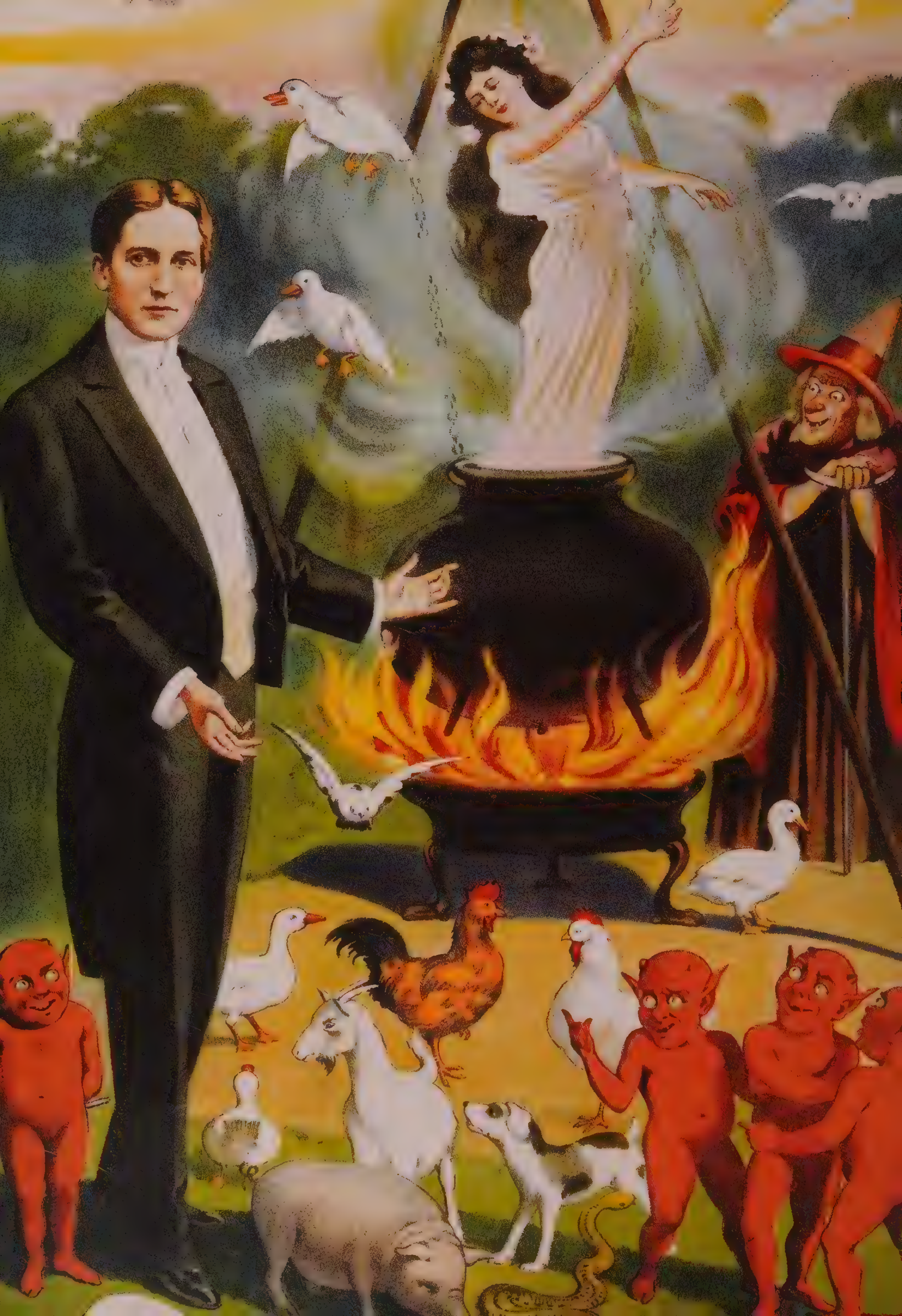


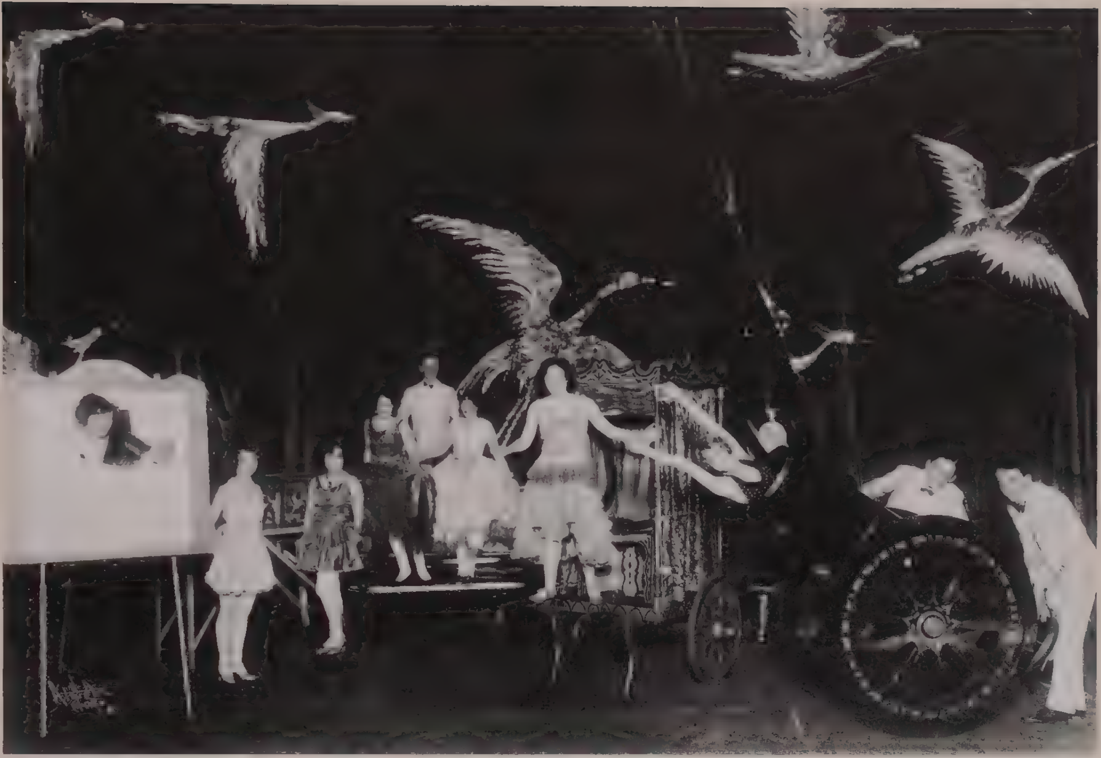
ABOVE: **ca. 1902** Audiences were astounded by this version of the Floating Lady, but Thurston knew that any magician could purchase the required apparatus. It wasn't until 1908, when he inherited Kellar's entire cache of apparatus, that Thurston performed the crown jewel of such illusions, Kellar's Levitation of Princess Karnac.

RIGHT: **ca. 1925** This publicity photo suggests that Thurston could have walked right into the audience with his floating lady. To create this impossible image, Thurston cut out a photograph of a lady and positioned her under his hands. This deceit aside, audiences were never disappointed by an actual performance of the Levitation of Princess Karnac.

OPPOSITE: **1908** The master mystifier Harry Kellar and the heir apparent Howard Thurston share top honors in this beautiful lithograph. Kellar's greatest illusion, the Levitation of Princess Karnac, was handed down to his successor. Thurston used it to secure his place as America's top magician.


THURSTON
KELLAR'S SUCCESSOR
KELLAR
THURSTON
COPYRIGHT 1908 BY
THE
STROBRIDGE
LITHO CO.
CINCINNATI & NEW YORK
MR. KELLAR SAYS: "THURSTON will be the Greatest Magician the World has ever known."

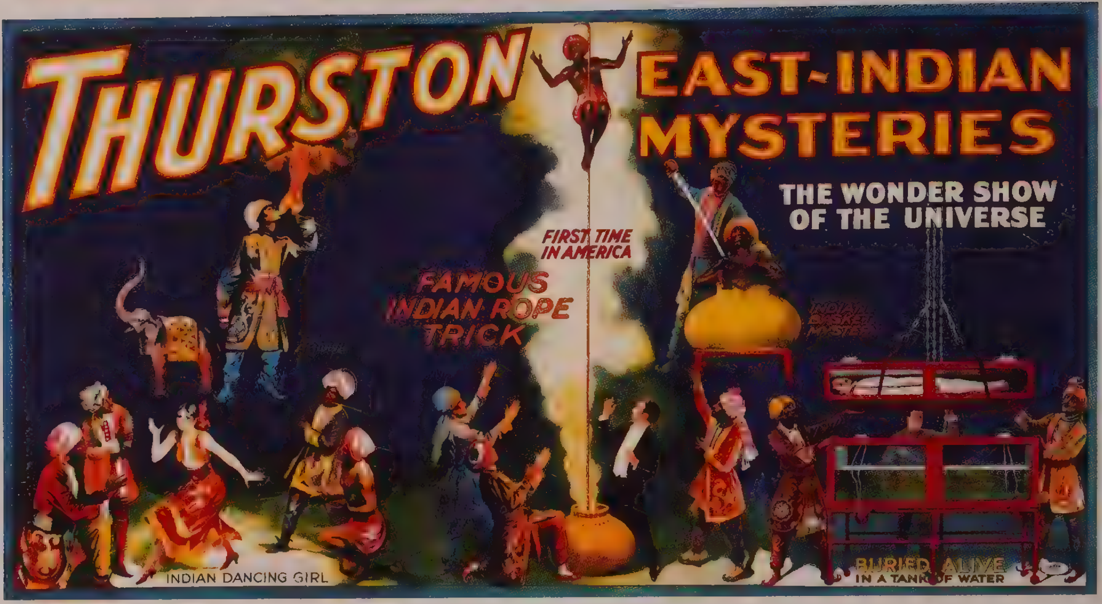




ABOVE: **ca. 1930** Thurston's stepdaughter, Jane, center, became his costar when she joined the show in 1928. The teenage beauty added singing, dancing, vitality, and sex appeal to her 60-year-old stepfather's show. Surrounded by cast members and the dynamic flamingo curtain that was made specifically for her act, Jane is shown here standing on the Rickshaw illusion, from which an assistant would appear.

BELOW: **ca. 1930** This image was a powerful piece of publicity. The production of a live rabbit in this crowd of laughing, screaming children was proof positive that a visit to Thurston's *Wonder Show of the Universe* was an experience never to be forgotten.

OPPOSITE: **1910** Thurston paid the Strobridge Lithograph Company to design this striking poster for the Witch's Caldron illusion. He spent more money building the apparatus and rehearsing for months, but, for technical reasons, the elaborate effect was never performed.

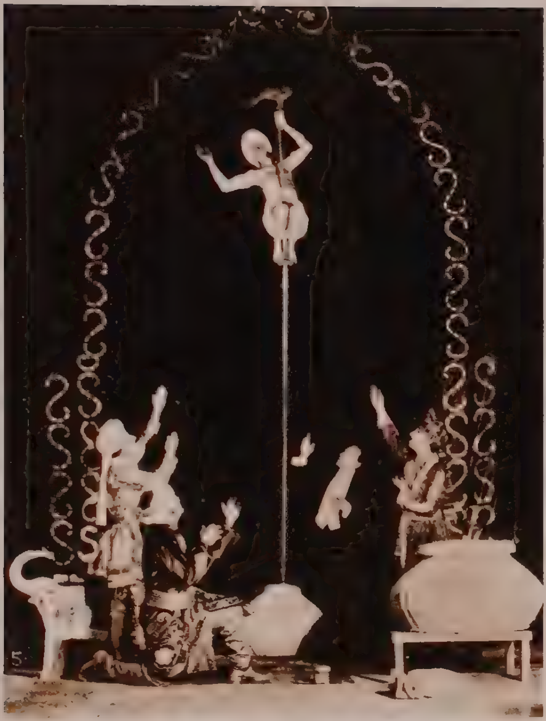

THURSTON
EAST-INDIAN MYSTERIES
THE WONDER SHOW OF THE UNIVERSE
FIRST TIME IN AMERICA
FAMOUS INDIAN ROPE TRICK
INDIAN BASKET MYSTERY
INDIAN DANCING GIRL
BURIED ALIVE IN A TANK OF WATER

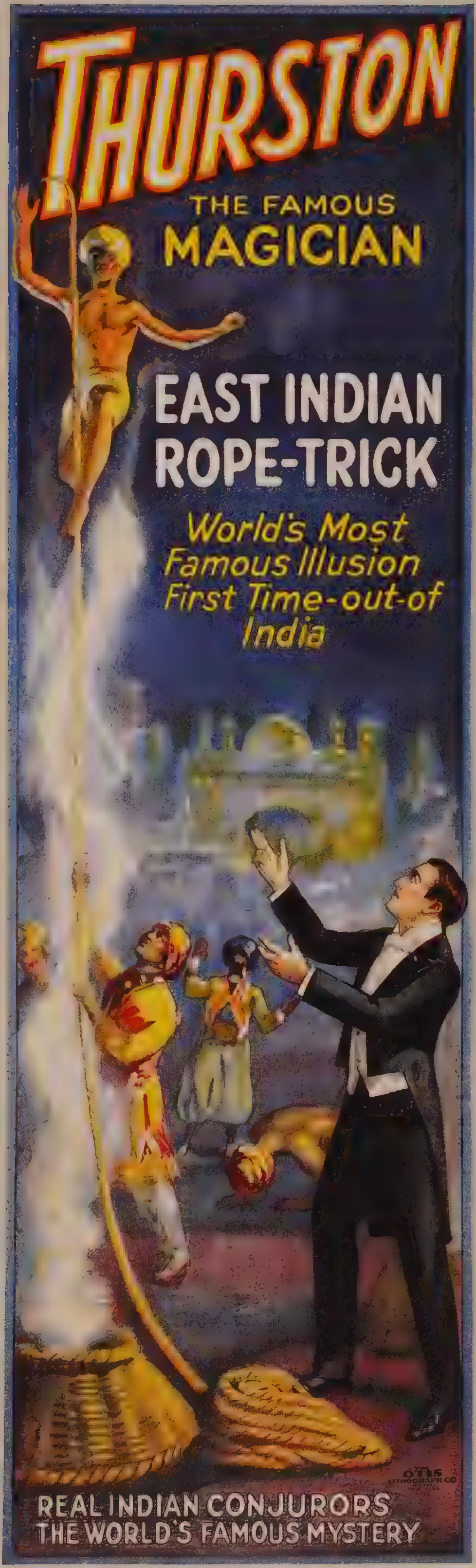
ABOVE: **1927** To promote his enormous show, Thurston used huge advertisements. This billboard-size poster measures nine feet high and 20 feet wide. To have these explosions of color appear where one day earlier there had been nothing would certainly generate excitement.

BELOW: **1927** Thurston added a group of genuine Indian fakirs to his show in 1927. Fire-eater Abdul Abdullah is shown here and on the left-hand side of the above poster. The other fakirs included Mohammed, who performed the Indian Basket Trick, and Chundra, who, in a sealed coffin, was submerged underwater for more than an hour.

With the business arrangement between Thurston and Tampa continuing to deteriorate, Tampa tried his luck at performing under canvas, where he could be his own boss. When this venture failed in less than three months, Sugden gave up magic altogether and found work at a Pittsburgh newspaper. Upon Thurston's death in 1936, Sugden sued the estate for nearly $600,000 — equal to more than $9 million today. Once Thurston's bills were paid, Sugden felt fortunate to get just $1,000.

Receiving the metaphorical mantle of magic from a powerful predecessor could transform an up-and-coming magician's life, but it came with no guarantee. Raymond Sugden arrived in the wrong place at the wrong time and was swallowed up in the changing face of popular culture. Today, "England's Court Magician" is but a mere footnote in magic's history. But in the case of young Howard Thurston and Harry Jansen, it accomplished exactly what it was designed to do: provide a boost from a reigning monarch to a worthy subject. Today, the names Thurston and Dante survive as icons of magic's golden age.

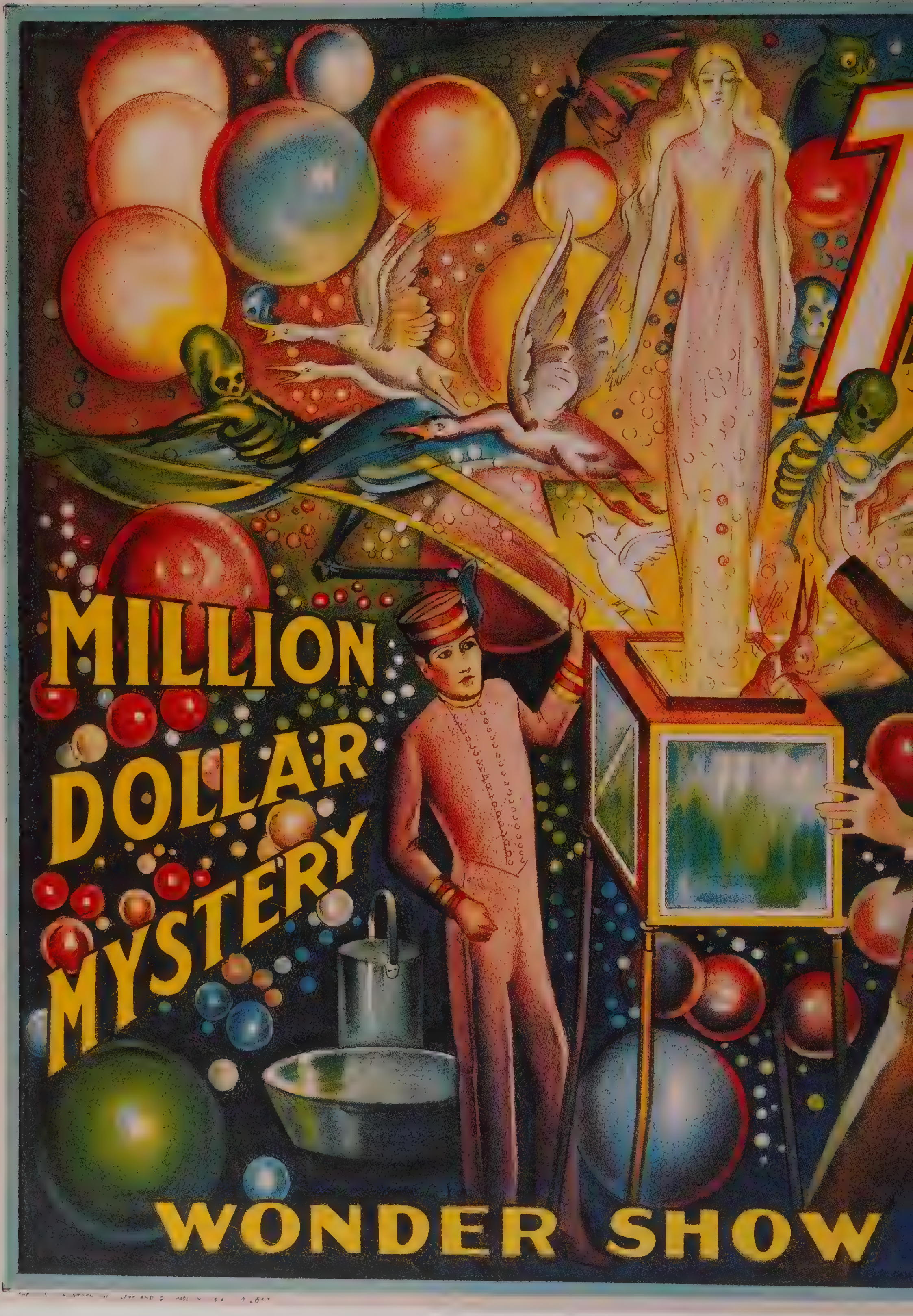


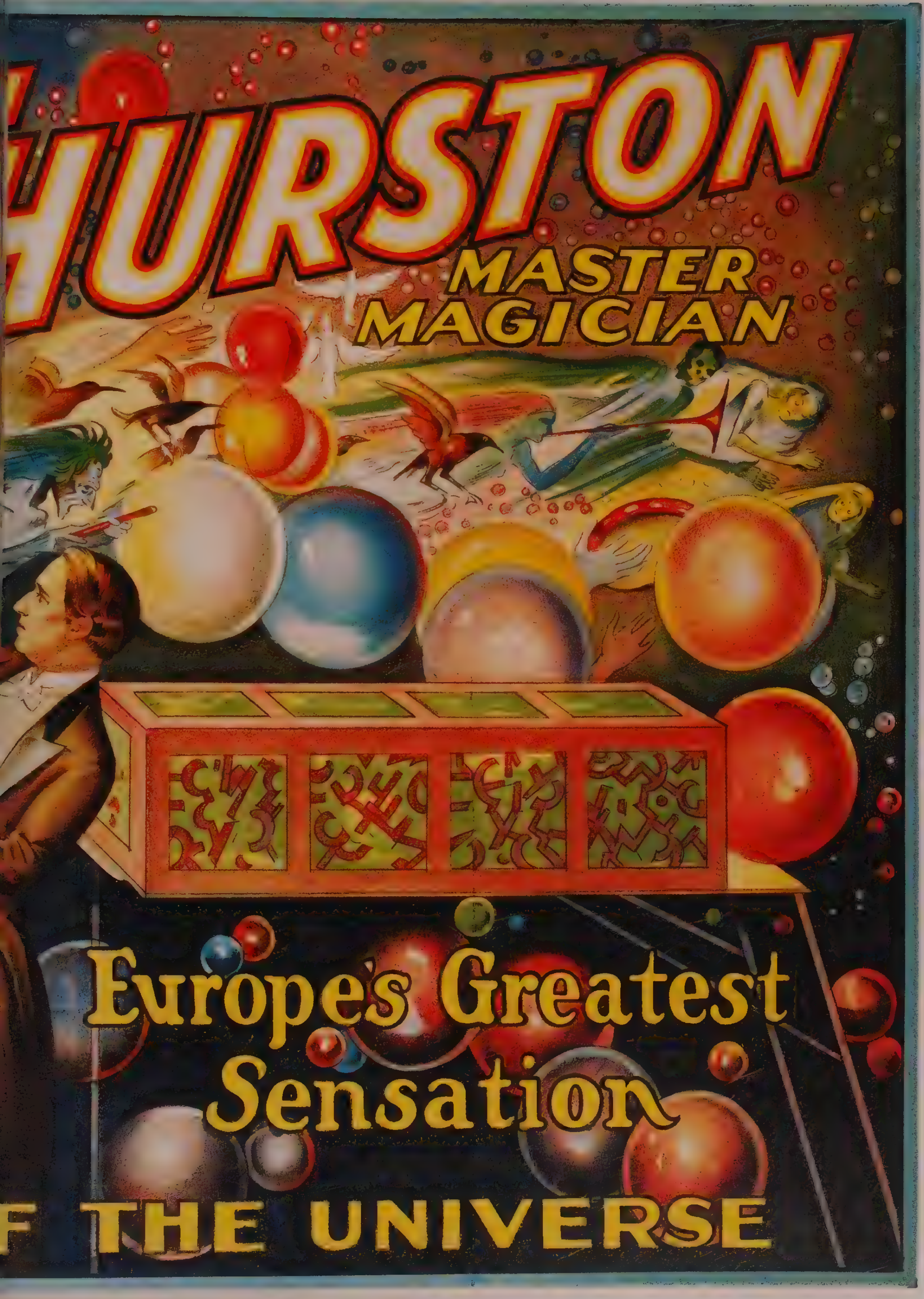

THURSTON
THE FAMOUS
MAGICIAN
EAST INDIAN
ROPE-TRICK
World's Most
Famous Illusion
First Time-out-of
India
OTIS LITHOGRAPH CO
REAL INDIAN CONJURORS
THE WORLD'S FAMOUS MYSTERY

ABOVE: **1927** The legendary Indian Rope Trick was not brought to America by an Indian fakir but by an imaginative writer from the *Chicago Daily Tribune* in 1890. Through repeated retellings it became legendary, and most illusionists included a version of it in their shows.

RIGHT: **1927** This advertisement for the East Indian Rope Trick evokes the streets of India. In this effect, a heavy rope was coiled inside a basket, one end of the rope ascended into the air, and a boy climbed to the top—and vanished in a puff of smoke.

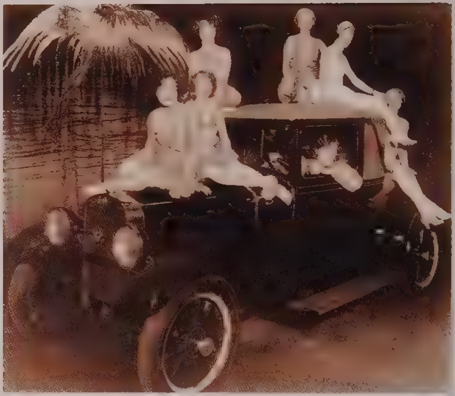
PAGES 300–301: **1929** The Million Dollar Mystery relied on a revolutionary new principle of concealment. Though it was technically daunting to present, Thurston felt the effect was well worth the effort. Virtually anything imaginable could appear from the small cabinet isolated in the middle of the stage.

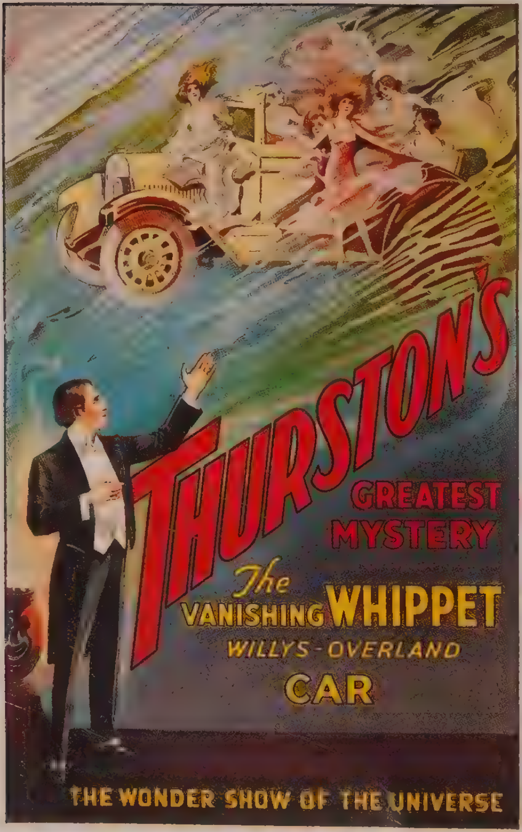

MILLION
DOLLAR
MYSTERY
WONDER SHOW


HURSTON
MASTER MAGICIAN
Europe's Greatest Sensation
F THE UNIVERSE

OPPOSITE: 1929 Vanishing from a cabinet onstage is one thing, but vanishing from a cabinet hanging high above the audience is a dangerous and thrilling spectacle. Spectators could see the cabinet from all sides, yet the woman still vanished. Cyril Yettmah, the illusion's creator, called it "the greatest illusion of [Thurston's] brilliant career."

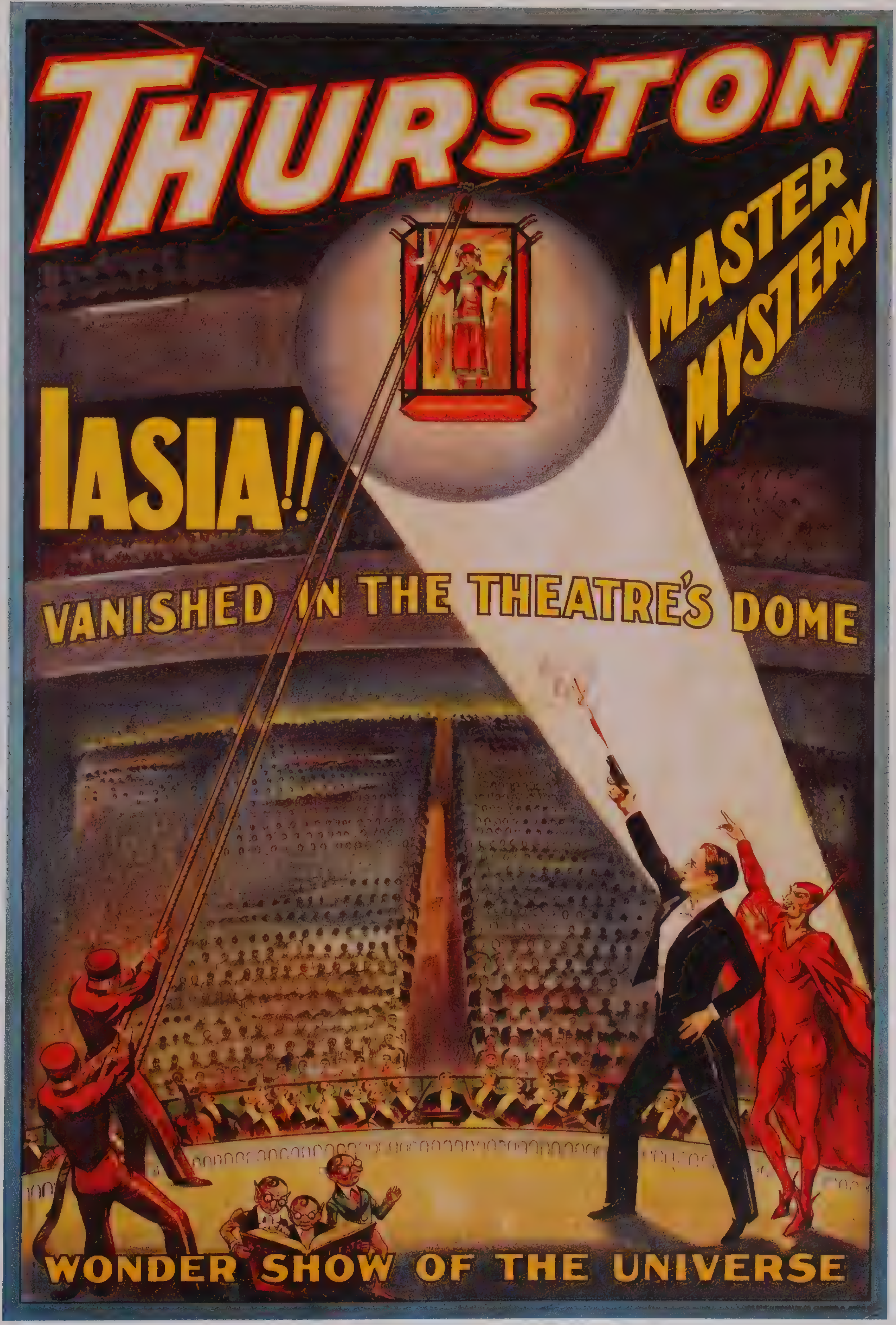
ABOVE: 1929 Staging a full evening of magic requires plenty of man- and womanpower, both onstage and behind the scenes. Here on the Steel Pier in Atlantic City, New Jersey, the entire team has assembled in the sunlight between shows for a cast photo. Thurston is in the center of the front row with stepdaughter and costar Jane seated in front of him.

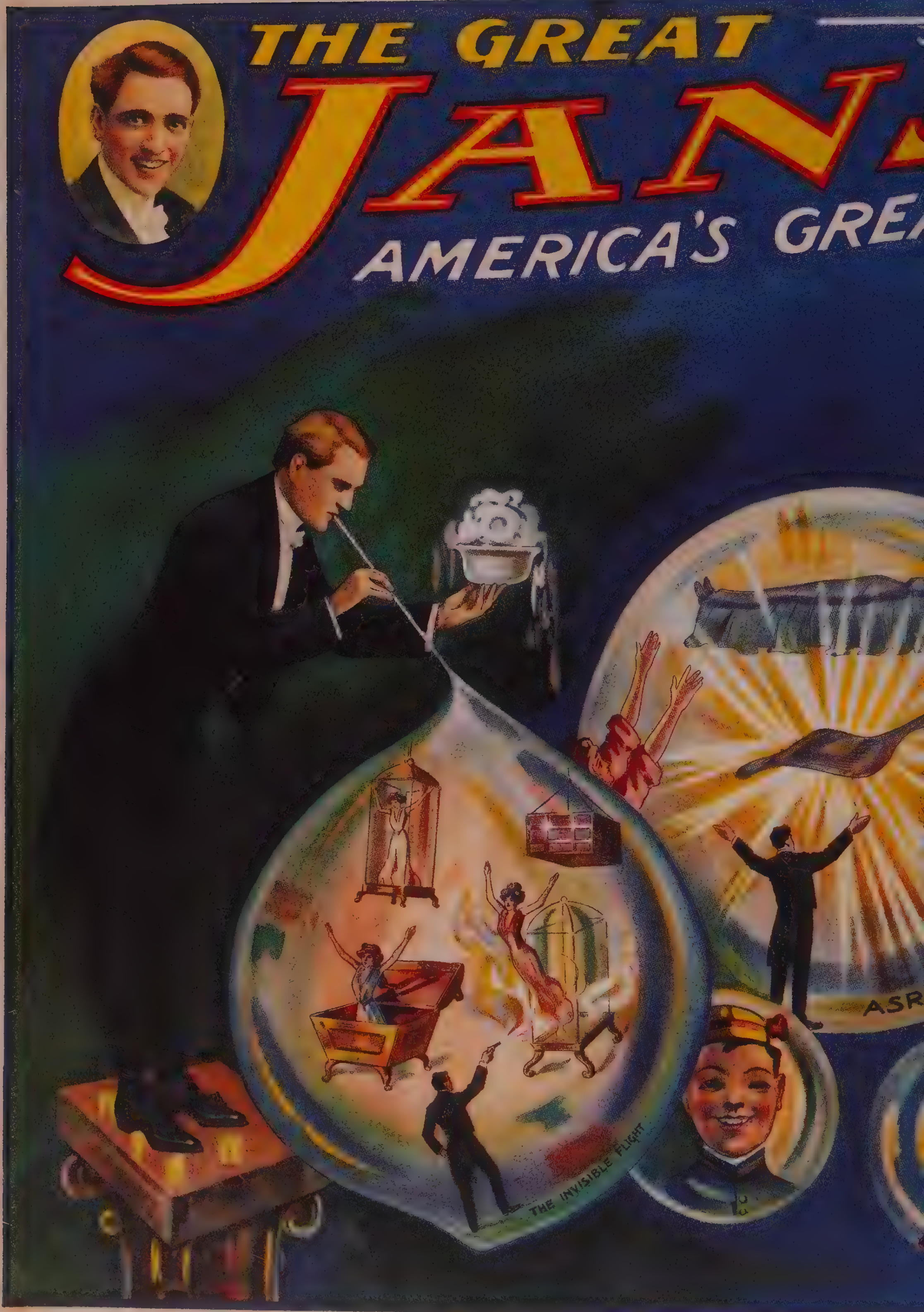


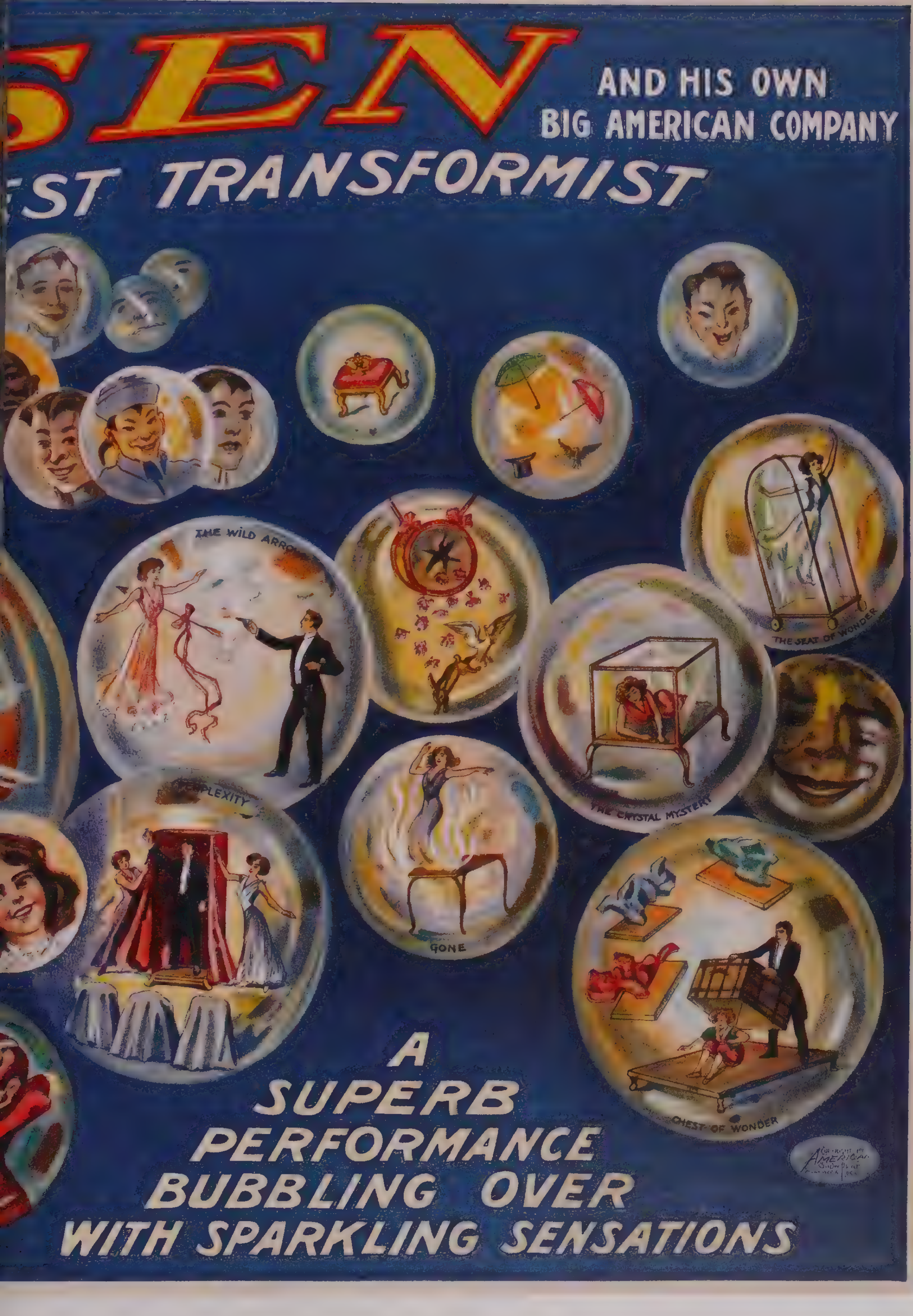


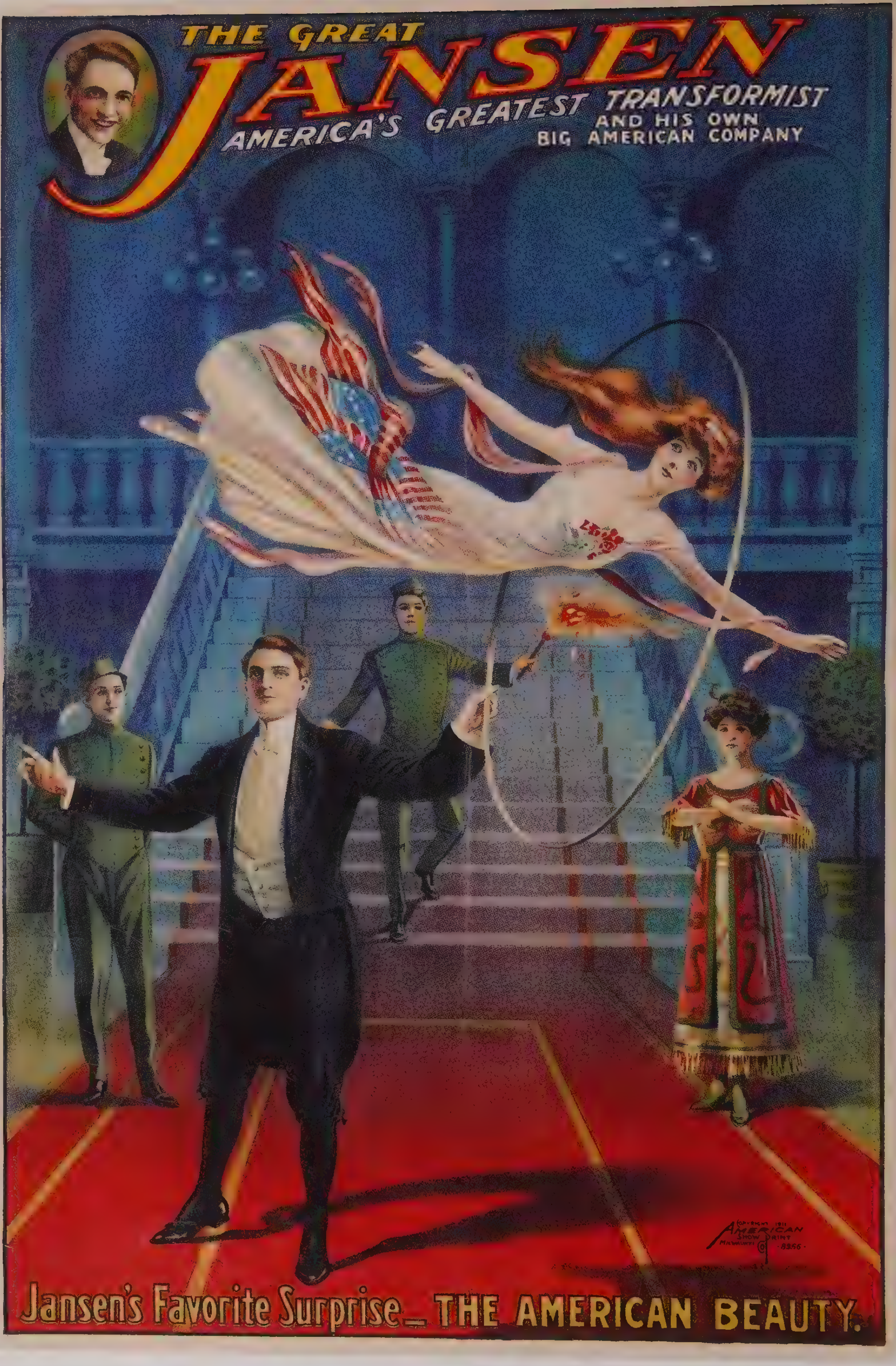
ABOVE RIGHT: 1929 The Vanishing Whippet (performed here with a Studebaker Erskine) is a fine example of Thurston's attempts to modernize his show. This illusion featured larger props, more spectacle, and certainly more sex appeal than anything performed by Kellar or Herrmann. It exemplifies the bigger-is-better theory that has extended to the present day.

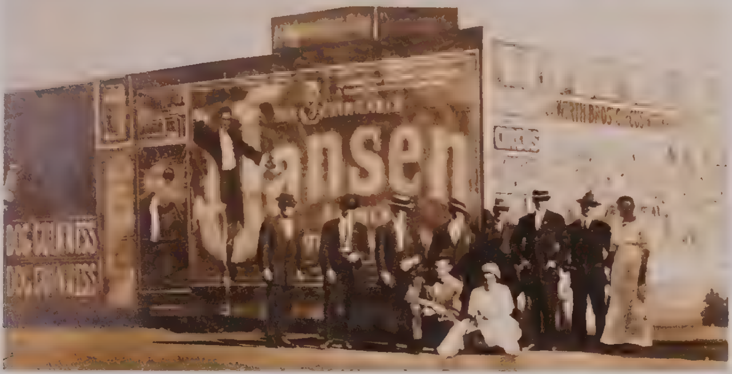
LEFT: 1928 An automobile filled with a bevy of beautiful girls vanishes into thin air. Pioneering the concept of product placement, the local Willys-Overland dealership in each city where Thurston appeared provided a brand-new Whippet automobile in exchange for an advertisement in Thurston's printed program.


THURSTON
MASTER MYSTERY
IASIA!!
VANISHED IN THE THEATRE'S DOME
FATE
WONDER SHOW OF THE UNIVERSE


THE GREAT
JAN
AMERICA'S GRE
THE INVISIBLE FLIGHT
ASR


SEN
AND HIS OWN
BIG AMERICAN COMPANY
EST TRANSFORMIST
THE WILD ARRO
THE SEAT OF WONDER
THE CRYSTAL MYSTERY
PERPLEXITY
GONE
CHEST OF WONDER
Copyright by American Show Print
A
SUPERB
PERFORMANCE
BUBBLING OVER
WITH SPARKLING SENSATIONS


THE GREAT
JANSEN
AMERICA'S GREATEST TRANSFORMIST
AND HIS OWN
BIG AMERICAN COMPANY
Copyright 1911
American Show Print Milwaukee Co
8956
Jansen's Favorite Surprise_ THE AMERICAN BEAUTY.



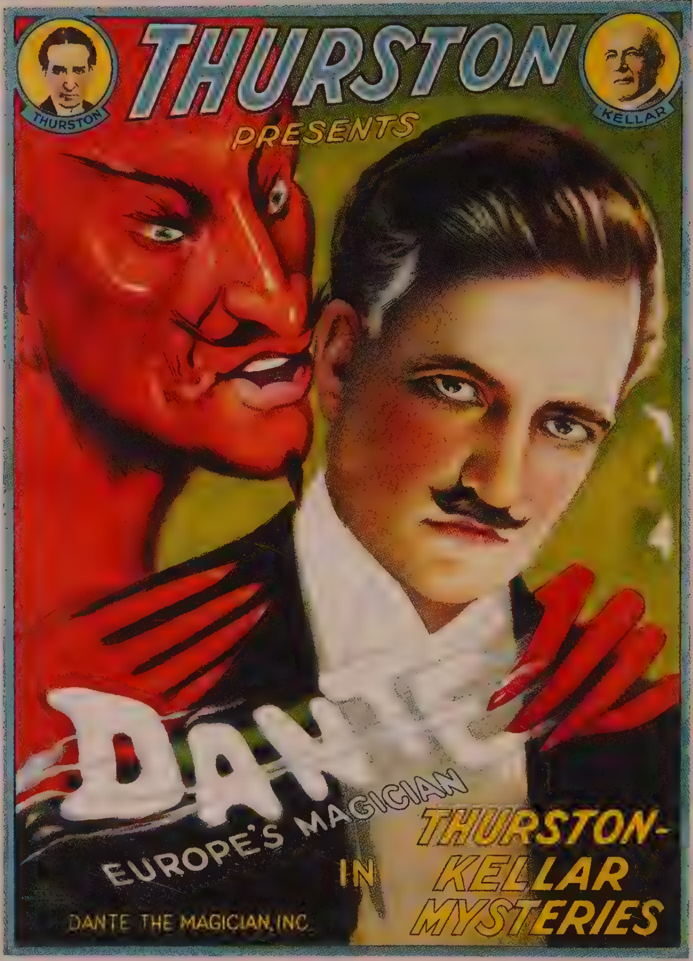
LEFT: 1920 During the early years before he became the world-famous sensation known as Dante, Jansen struggled like all young performers. At this Canadian exposition he worked in a show called *Egyptian Hall—England's Home of Mystery*, a name obviously inspired by John Nevil Maskelyne's famous theater in London.

LEFT BELOW: **1912** The lifeblood of any touring illusion show was the quality of its outdoor pictorial advertising. In the far corners of the world a good supply of posters was as valuable as the actual illusions. Harry Jansen's company is seen here posing in front of a large stand of Jansen posters in Kalgoorlie, Australia.

RIGHT: **ca. 1910** During his formative years, young Harry Jansen became a polished performer and developed the ability to create and build his own original magic. These valuable skills prompted Thurston to hire him as foreman of his workshop, where he could experiment and create new illusions.

OPPOSITE: **1911** This poster was produced in anticipation of Jansen's first world tour, long before he became Thurston's successor. The fact that these performers originated in far-off America was considered so important that it was spelled out no less than three times on this striking lithograph.

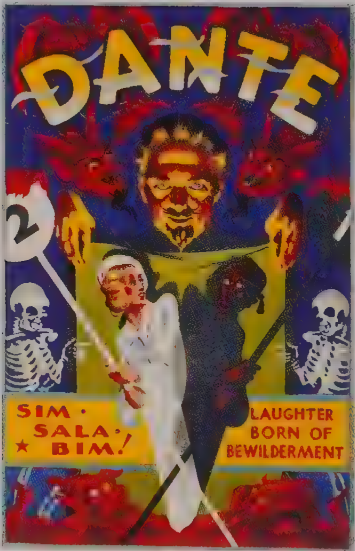
PAGES 304–305: **1911** Danish-born Harry Jansen was a seasoned professional performer as well as a creative thinker and skilled builder. These valuable abilities led to his becoming Thurston's shop foreman in 1921. The experience working for America's top magician was valuable, but Jansen knew that his future lay on the global stage.

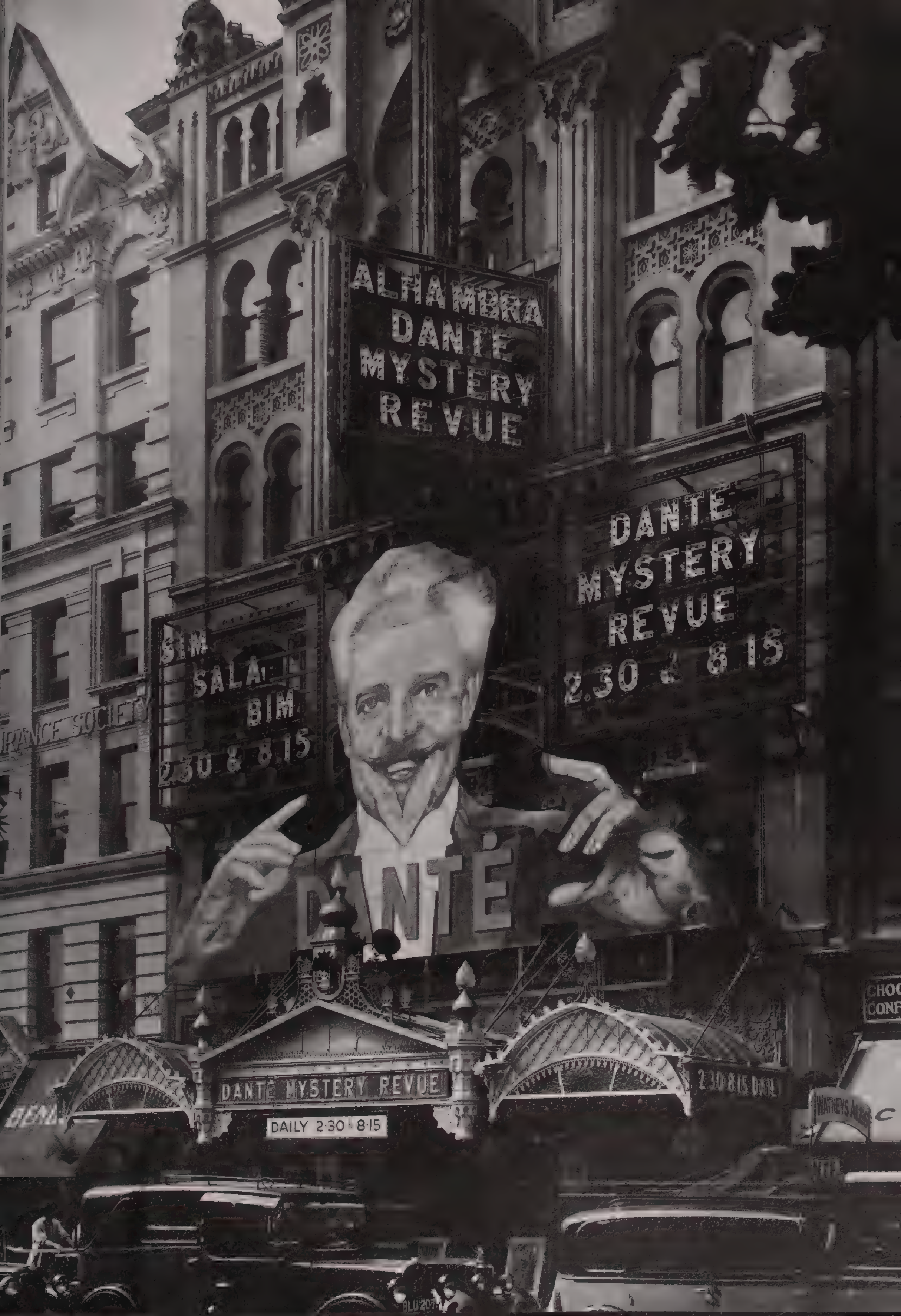

THURSTON
THURSTON
KELLAR
PRESENTS
DANTE
EUROPE'S MAGICIAN
IN
THURSTON-KELLAR MYSTERIES
DANTE THE MAGICIAN, INC.

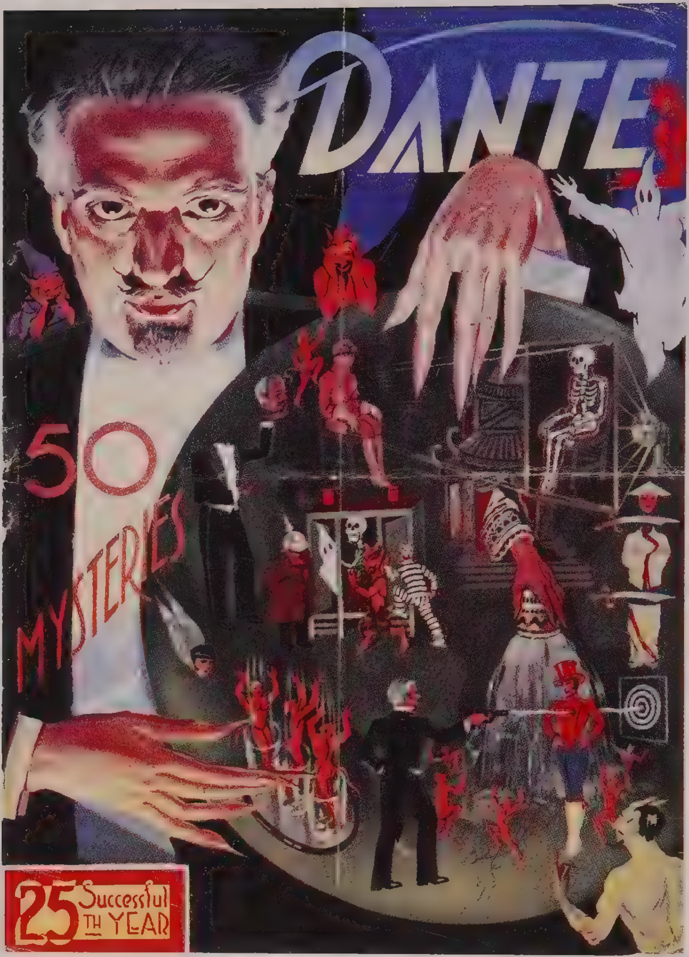
LEFT: **1923** This was the year that Harry Jansen became Dante, under the auspices of Howard Thurston. The images and names of Thurston and Kellar were incorporated into this poster design to help sell the still unknown Dante. In 1927 he set out on a world tour that would continue for an incredible 12 years.

RIGHT: **ca. 1940** Dante's familiar devils and skeletons enhance this rare poster that features an illusion called Black and White. A man and a woman, holding signs labeled 1 and 2, respectively, were wrapped in large cloths on opposite sides of the stage. Upon Dante's command they miraculously changed places.

OPPOSITE: **1936** In August of this year, Dante moved his highly polished mystery revue, *Sim Sala Bim*, into London's Alhambra Theatre. So overwhelming was his success that his show remained on tour in the British Isles for an incredible three years.


DANTE
2
1
SIM · SALA · BIM!
★
LAUGHTER BORN OF BEWILDERMENT

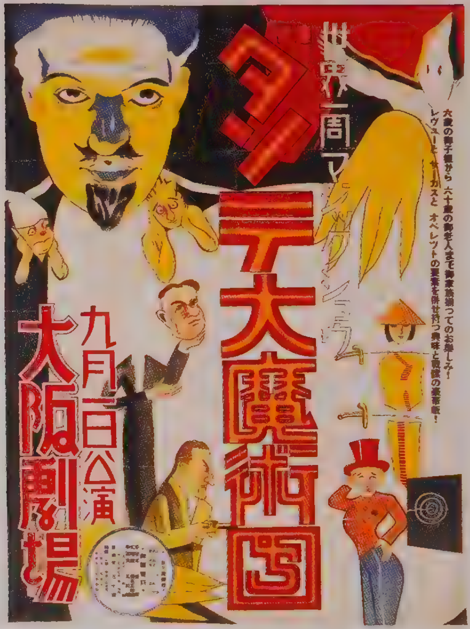

ALHAMBRA
DANTE
MYSTERY
REVUE
SIM
SALA
BIM
2.30 & 8.15
DANTE
MYSTERY
REVUE
2.30 & 8.15
RANCE SOCIETY
DANTE
DANTE MYSTERY REVUE
DAILY 2·30 8·15
2.30 8.15 DAILY
CHOC
CONF
WATNEYS ALES
BLU 207

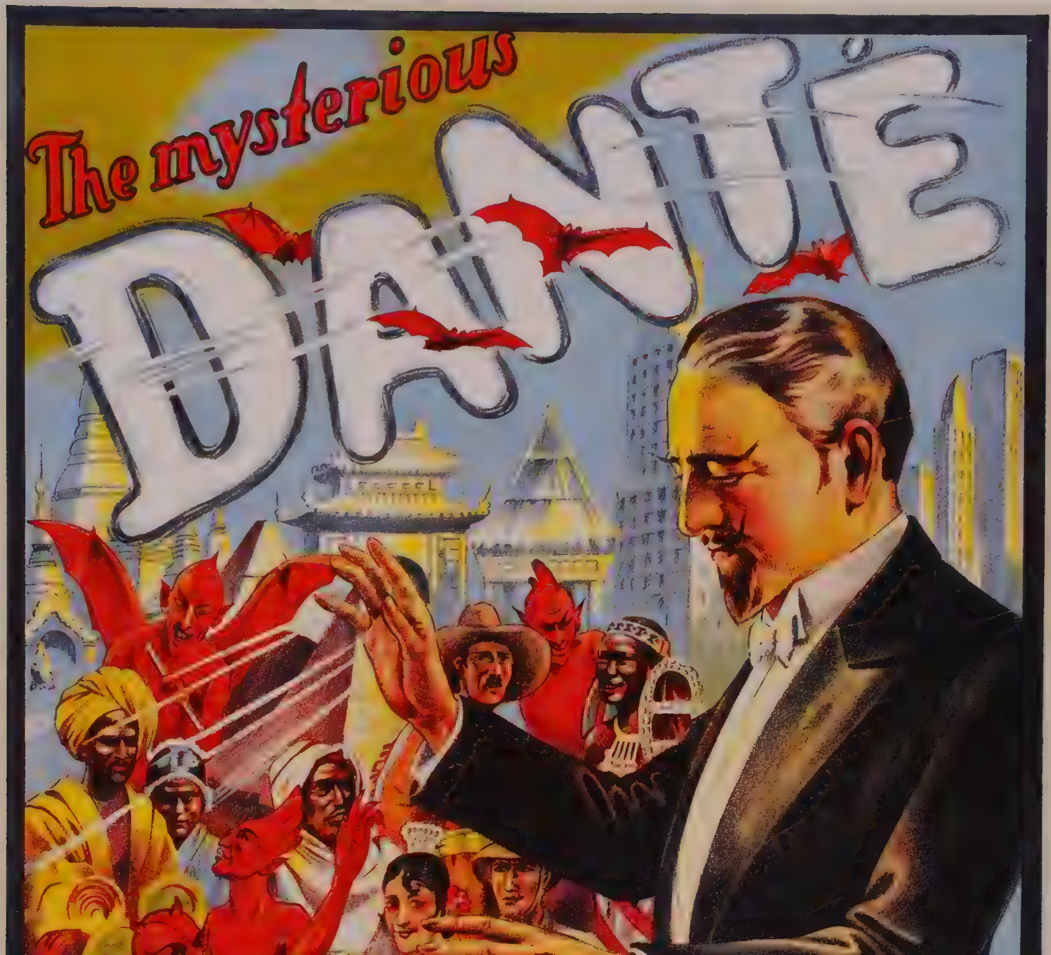

Dante
50
MYSTERIES
25th Successful YEAR

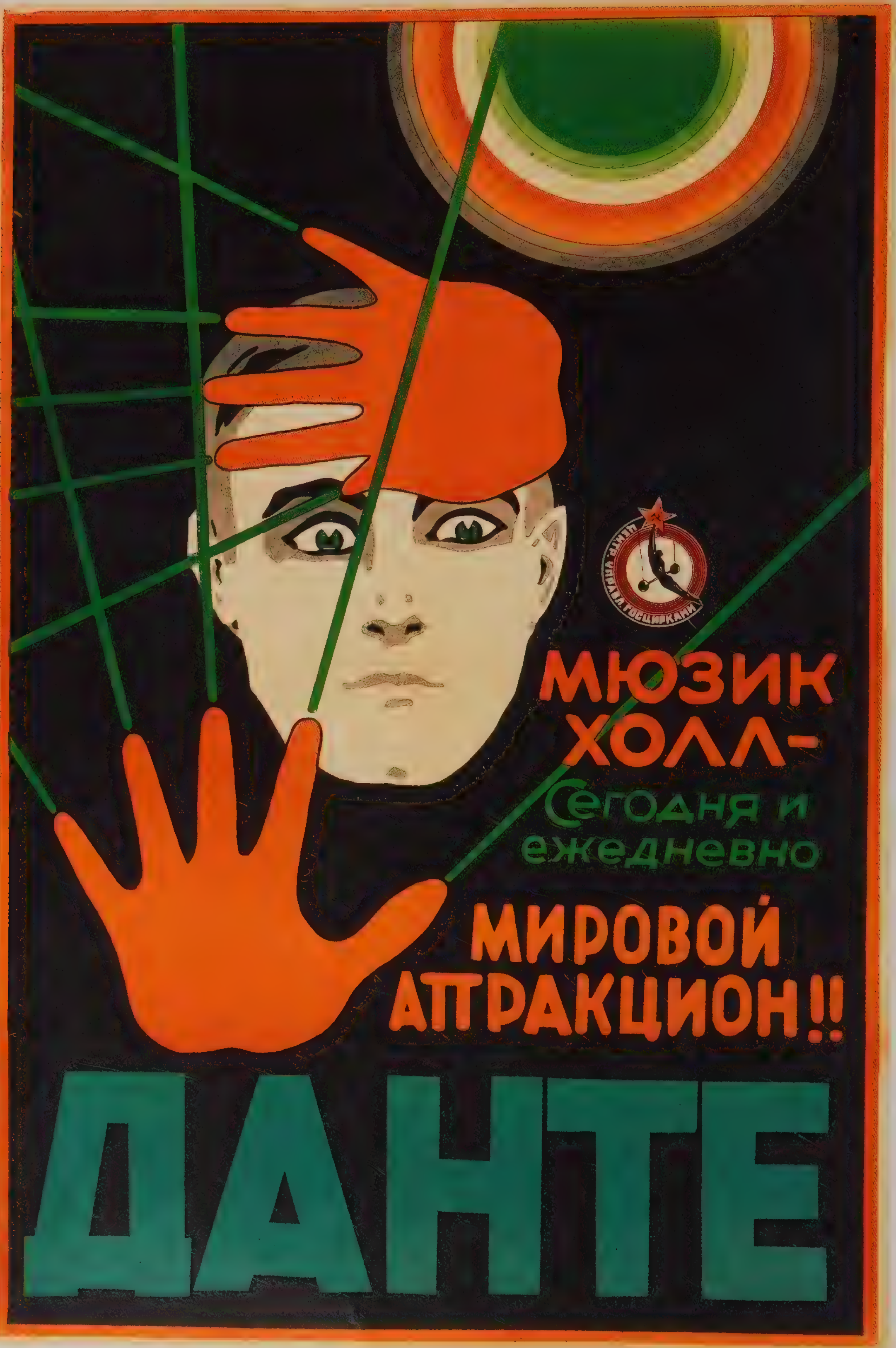
OPPOSITE: 1930 By the time this poster was produced by the Friedlander Litho Company in Hamburg, Germany, Dante had the most successful illusion show in the world. No longer did he need the images of Kellar and Thurston on his posters to validate his ability.

ABOVE: 1931 Dante was beginning the greatest decade of his storied career when this beautiful, 28-page souvenir program was printed. The anticipation must have been palpable as audience members studied their programs, knowing that they were about to witness all of the mysteries that were so beautifully depicted.

RIGHT: 1934 Dante's engagement in Shanghai, China, coincided with a heat wave. When not onstage, Dante was constantly trying to secure future bookings. From China the company would travel to Japan, then Hong Kong, the Philippines, and beyond, seemingly forever.

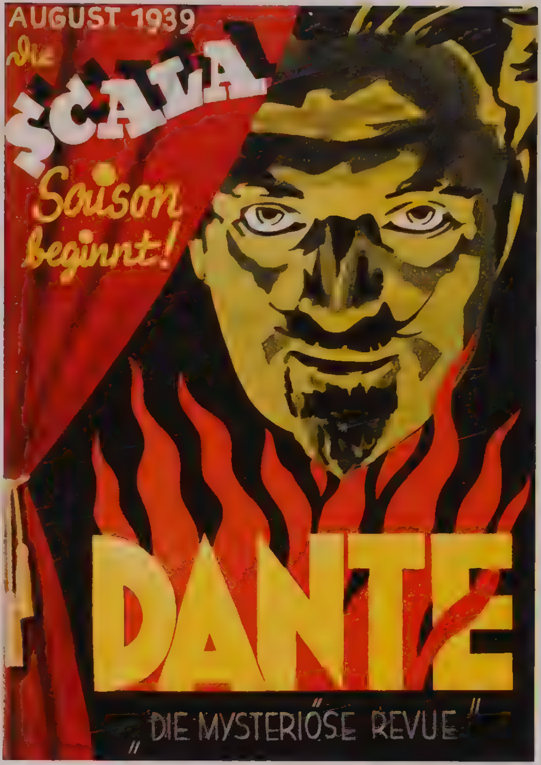

世界一周
ダンテ大魔術団
大衆の御子様から 六十歳の御老人まで御家族揃つてのお楽しみ！
レヴューとサーカスと オペレットの要素を併せ持つ興味と戦慄の豪華版！
九月一日公演
大阪劇場


The mysterious
DANTE
and his own BIG American company
Presenting the Worlds greatest
MYSTERY-SPECTACLE
LITH ADOLPH FRIEDLANDER HAMBURG 4 8590


ЦЕНТР УПРАВЛ. ГОСЦИРКАМИ
МЮЗИК
ХОЛЛ-
Сегодня и
ежедневно
МИРОВОЙ
АТТРАКЦИОН!!
ДАНТЕ

OPPOSITE: **1929** In January of this year, Dante opened at the 2,500-seat Moscow Music Hall for one of the most successful engagements of his career. The Russian public had never seen anything that could rival Dante's spectacular show. This poster is representative of the style popularized by the Russian artists of the day.

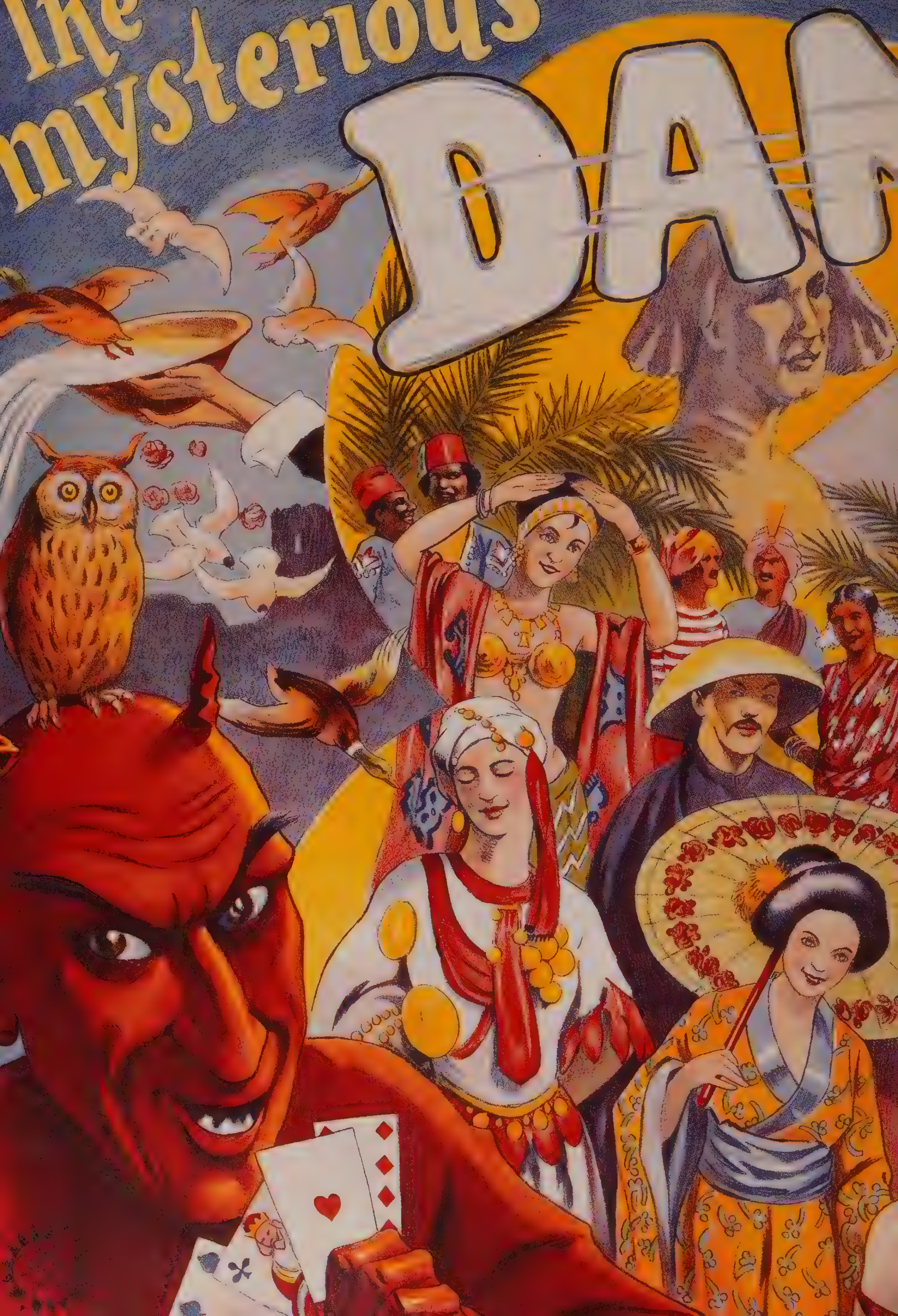
RIGHT: **1939** In August 1939 Dante appeared at the Scala Theatre in Berlin. This was just weeks before Germany invaded Poland and World War II began. While enjoying unprecedented success, Dante received word that the border would close at any moment. Each company member managed to escape to Sweden with just one suitcase.

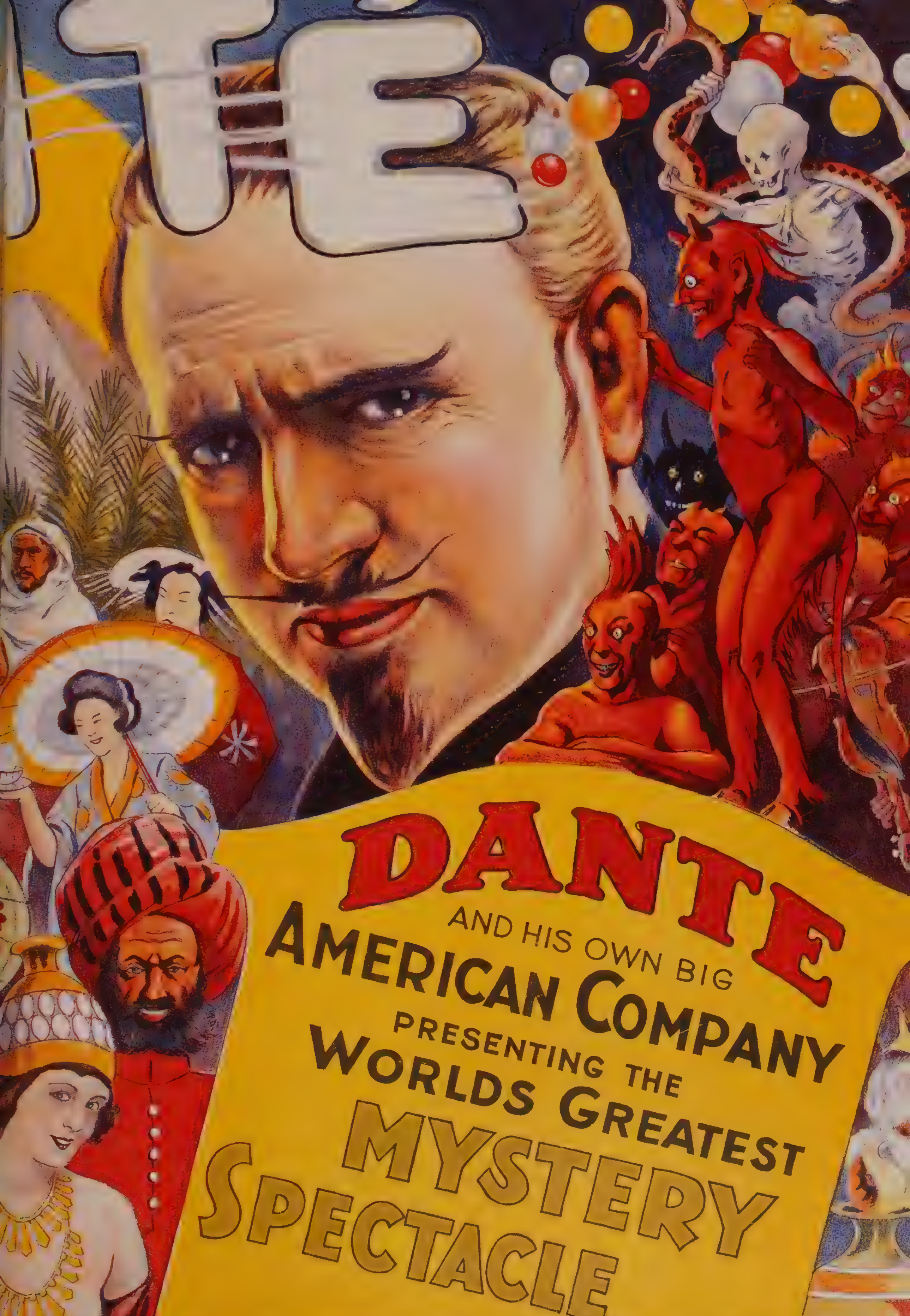


John E. Reed
•HOLLYWOOD•

LEFT: **ca. 1940** Dante discovered Moi-Yo Miller in Australia and before long she was being advertised as "Australia's most beautiful woman" and appearing as Dante's costar. When the Dante show reached Hollywood, Moi-Yo posed for glamour photographer John E. Reed.

PAGES 314–315: **1932** With America suffering through the Great Depression, Dante traveled to more prosperous parts of the globe. This poster promised the world's mysteries presented by "His Own Big American Company." Dante's illustrious career continued through the 1940s. Many consider *Sim Sala Bim* to be the greatest magic show ever staged.


The
mysterious
DA

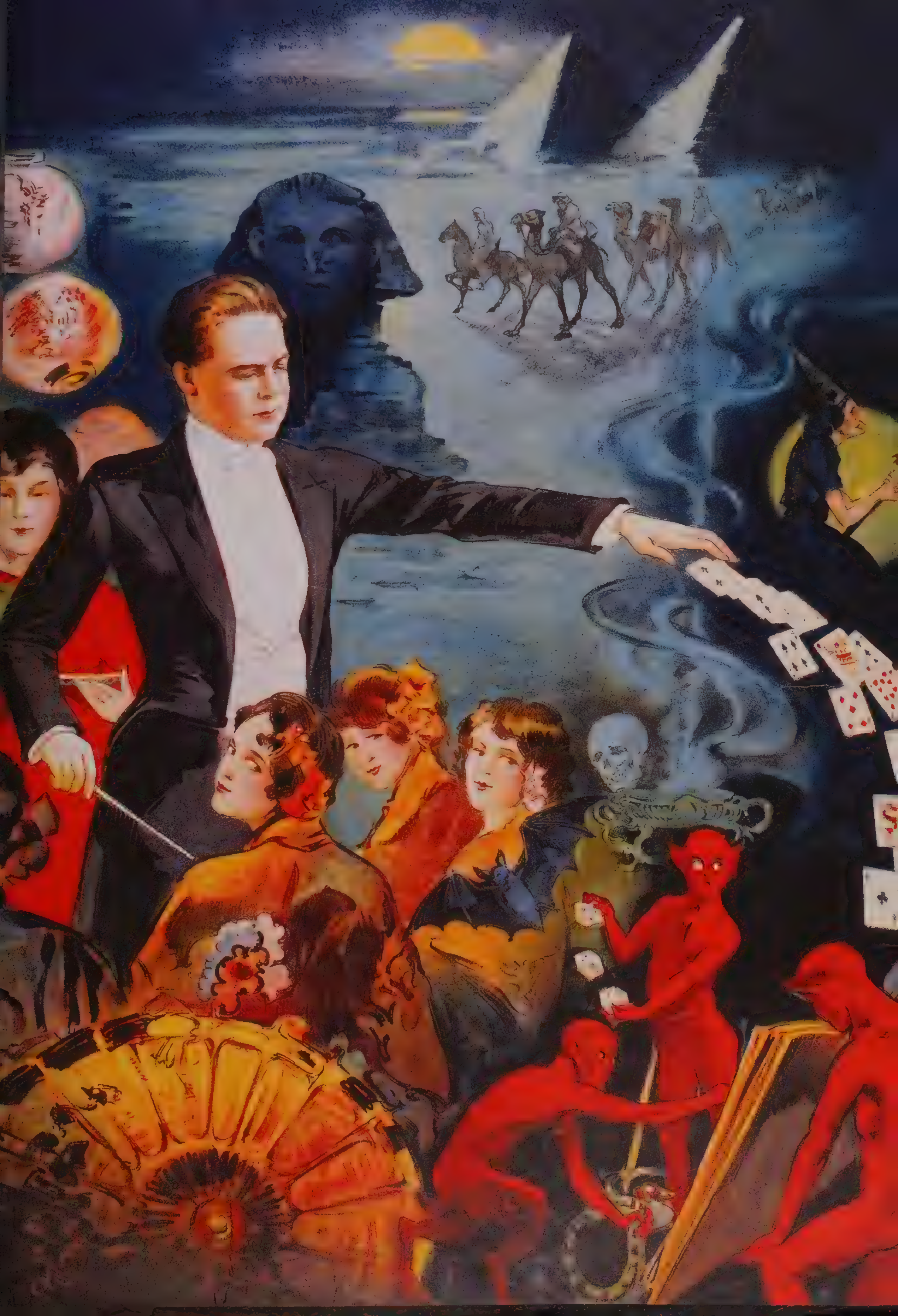

DANTE
AND HIS OWN BIG
AMERICAN COMPANY
PRESENTING THE
WORLDS GREATEST
MYSTERY
SPECTACLE

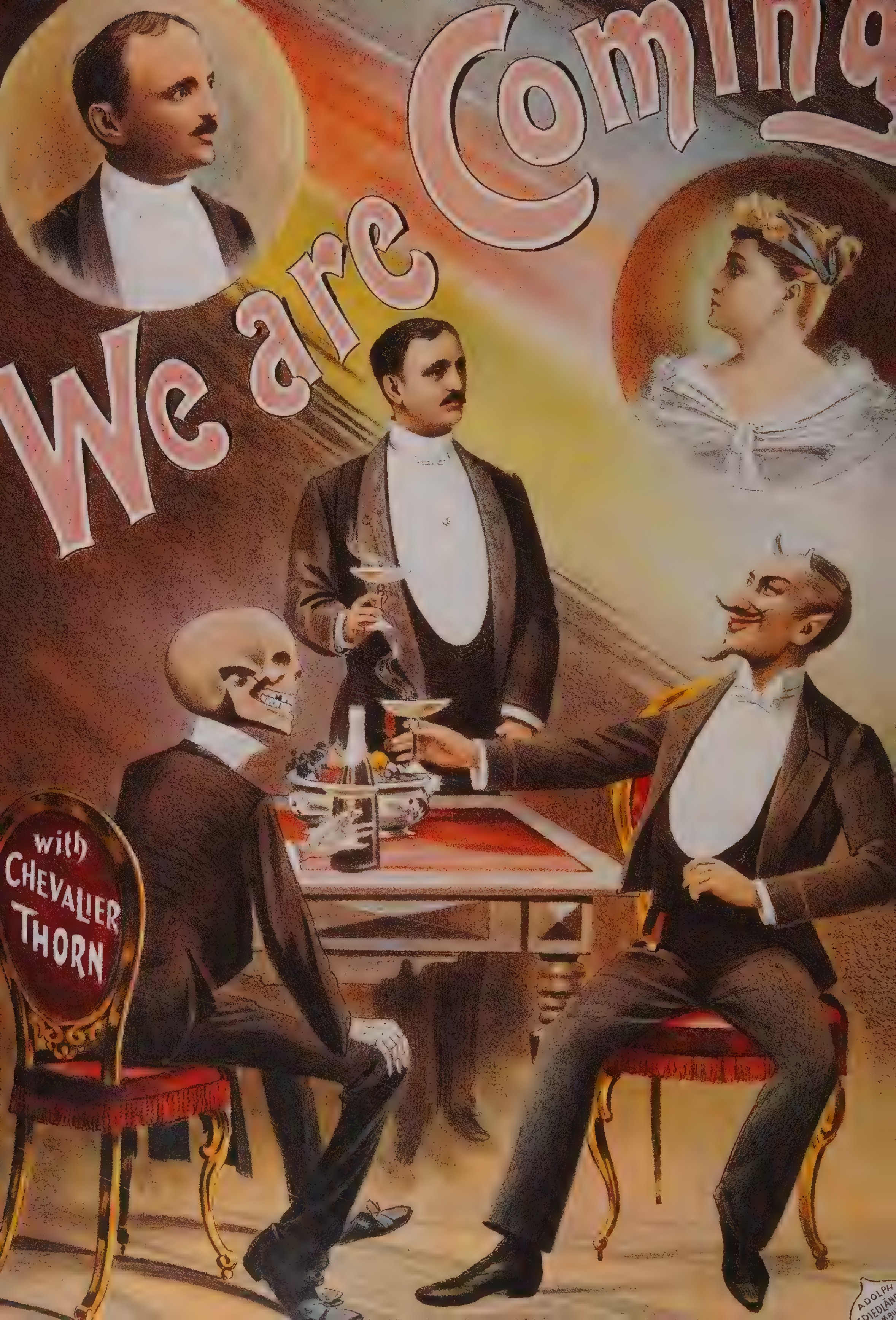
6 6

THE GREAT TOURING SHOWS

Mike Caveney

6 6




We are Coming
with CHEVALIER THORN
ADOLPH
FRIEDLÄN

6

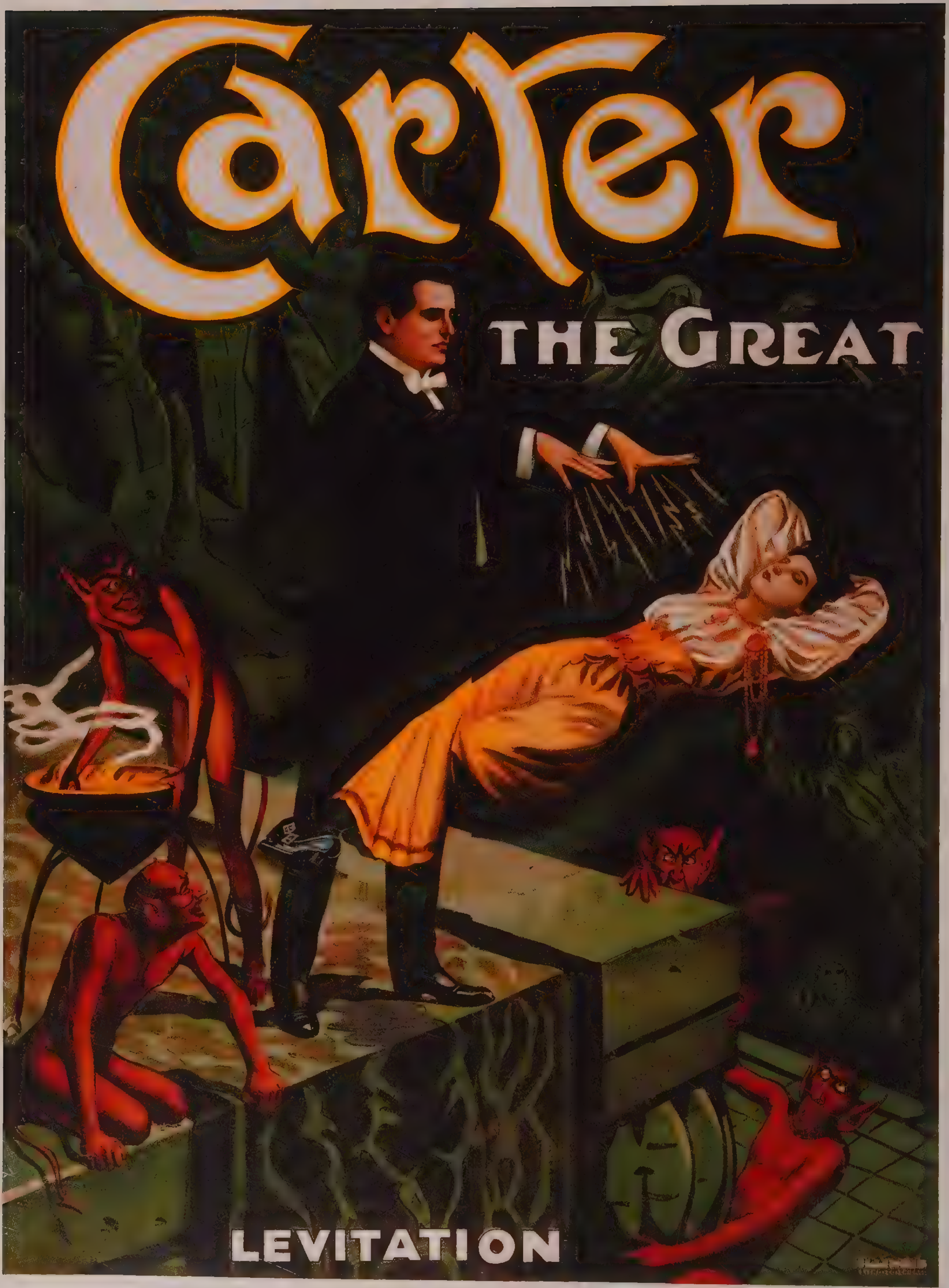
Mike Caveney

THE GREAT TOURING SHOWS

Hundreds of years ago, magicians carried their proverbial bags of tricks to new audiences either by foot or, at best, by horse-drawn wagons. The mode of transportation largely determined the size of their shows and the distances they could travel. Usually, they moved from one fairground to the next. At the end of the 19th century, the emergence of the great touring illusion shows and vaudeville coincided with improvements in rail and steamship travel, wireless communication, and the fact that city dwellers had, for the first time, disposable income and leisure time. The rapid growth of theaters was a response by theatrical impresarios around the world to tap into that extra cash by providing amusements to fill that time.

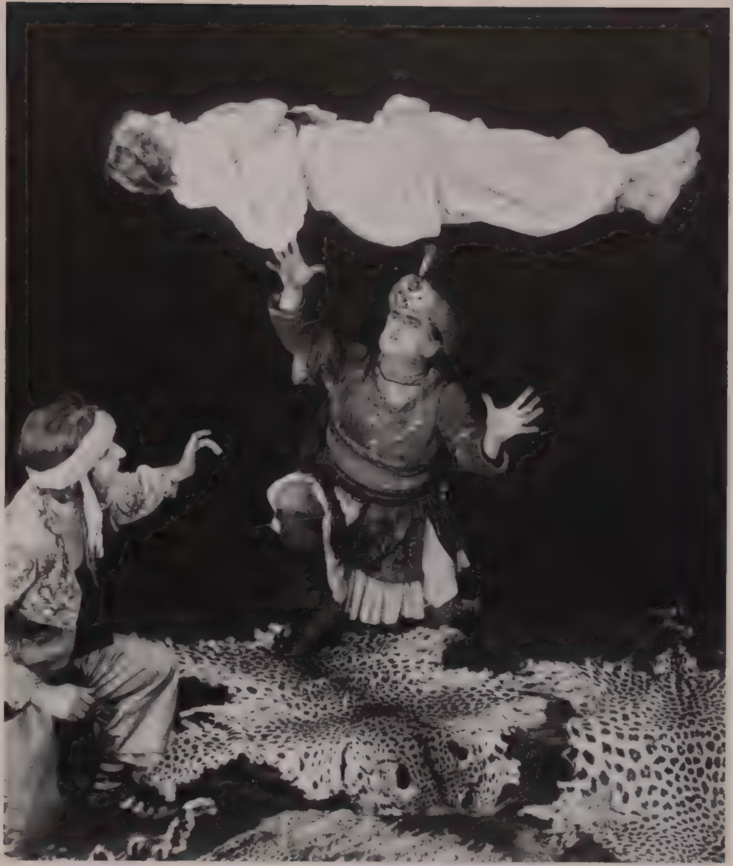
PAGE 317: **ca. 1930** By the late 19th century, advances in rail and sea travel, international communication, and lithographic printing allowed magicians to entertain new audiences in distant lands. This interesting detail from a Grover George poster promises mysteries gathered from around the world, including the spirit world.

OPPOSITE: **ca. 1892–93** Austrian magician Chevalier Ernest Thorn and his wife, Julia, boldly announce that they are bringing their illusion show to America for the first time. In a larger sense this poster stands as a proclamation from all magicians that every part of the world is now within reach of the great touring illusion shows.

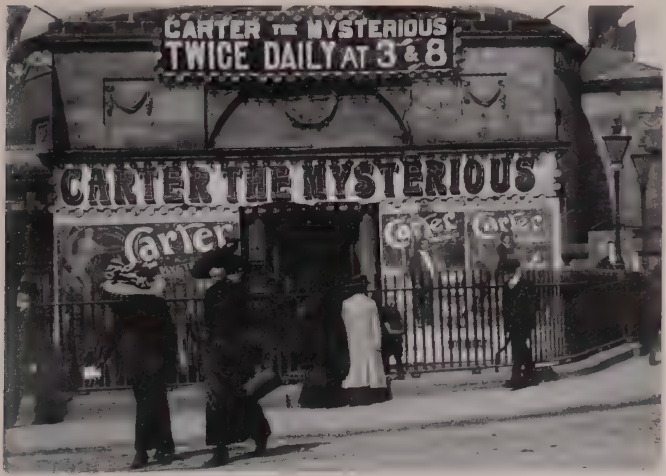

Carter
THE GREAT
LEVITATION

OPPOSITE: 1921 Pennsylvania-born Charles Joseph Carter, a.k.a. Carter the Great, was perhaps the most widely traveled illusionist of them all. Between 1907 and 1936 he completed seven lengthy circumnavigations of the globe, entertaining kings and commoners on six continents.

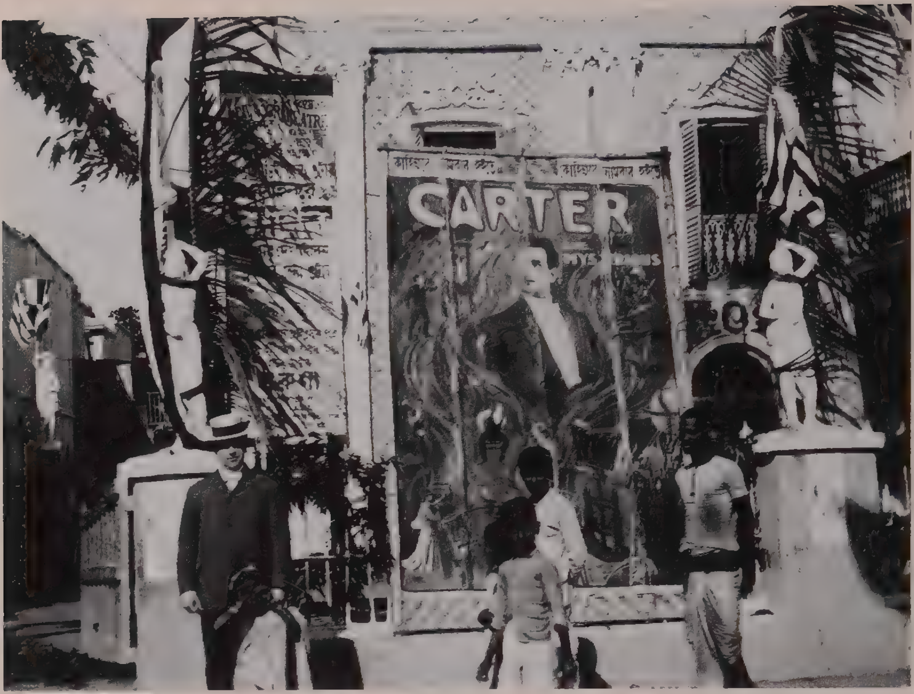
RIGHT: 1909 Carter performs the most coveted illusion in magic, Harry Kellar's version of the levitation. To acquire this treasure Carter hired two men who had spent years working backstage with Kellar. They brought with them the knowledge that allowed Carter to duplicate this masterpiece of magic.



From the 1880s to the early 20th century, traveling to the farthest corners of the world involved everything from state-of-the-art steam trains and steamships to horse-drawn wagons and oxcarts. Each passing decade saw dramatic improvements to the world's transportation system: faster and more reliable trains and ships reaching ever more destinations, improved roads, and, eventually, cars and trucks. All of these factors facilitated the magician's ability to transport larger and larger shows to ever-widening audiences, and the result was a period that today is fondly recalled as the golden age of magic.



LEFT: 1911 People walking by the Rotunda Theatre in Dublin, Ireland, are drawn to the blaze of color presented by Carter's advertising. So effective were these enormous nine-foot-tall images that Carter was able to present two shows per day for a full month.

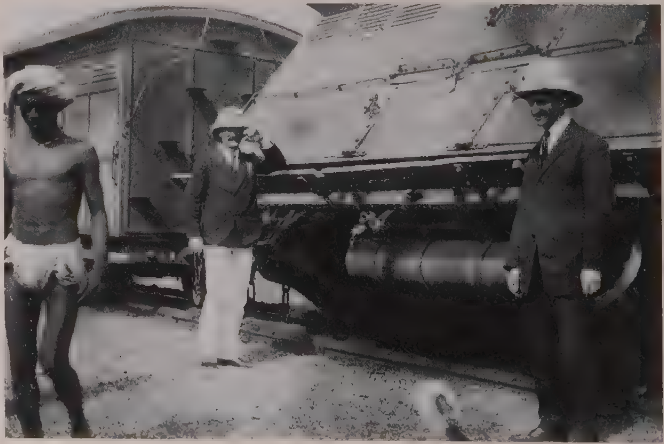


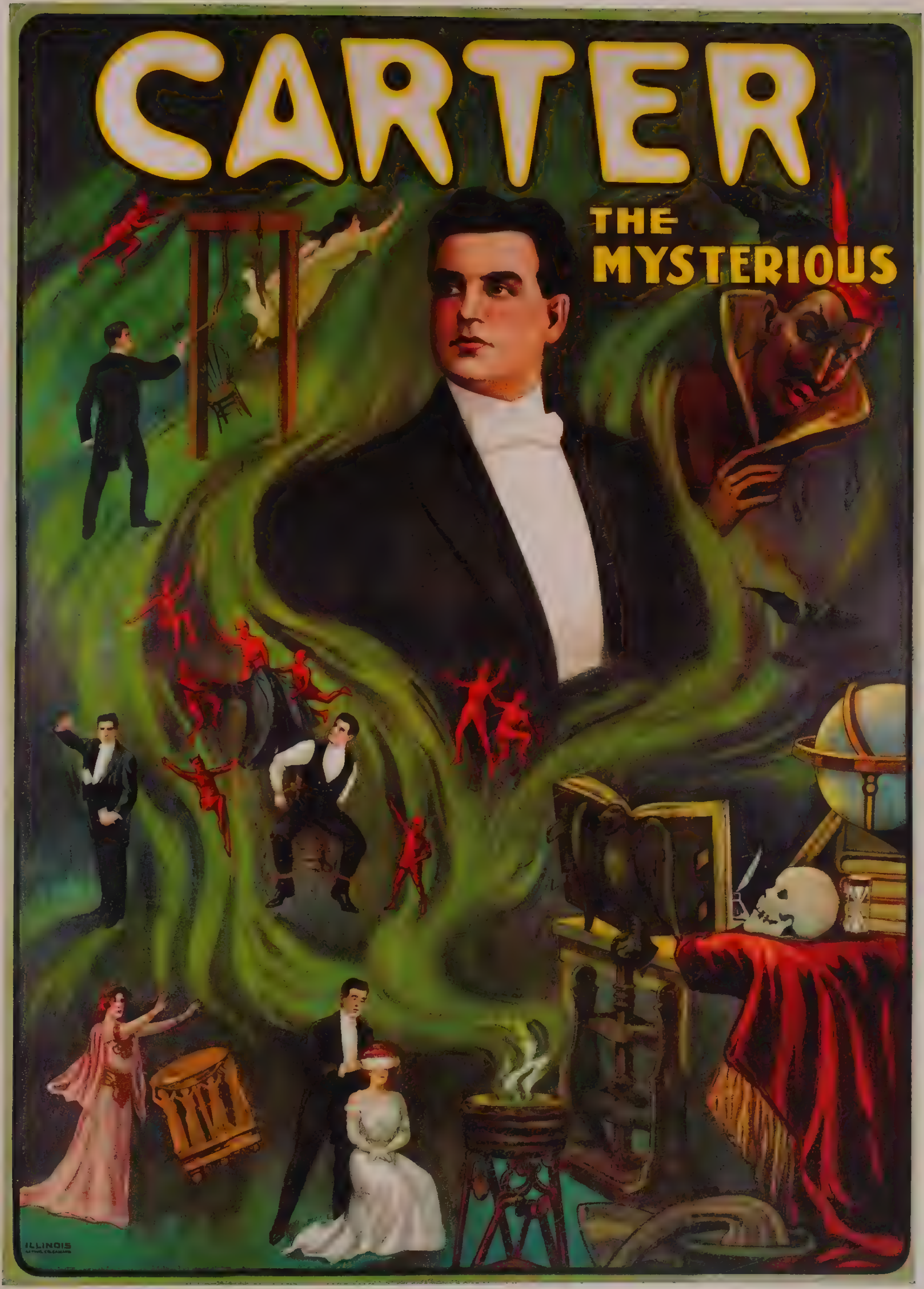
ABOVE: **1909** The poster opposite is visible in this photograph, doing the job for which it was designed: advertising a show. Considering how short a life these fragile lithographs were designed for, it is miraculous that any have survived. Carter can be seen at the left, outside the Kohinoor Theatre in Calcutta, India.

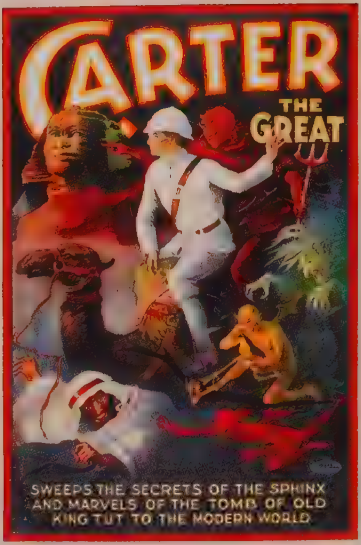
Another important factor in the growth of the touring illusion shows were advancements in commercial lithography. Before the existence of radio and television, performers relied on printed advertisements to promote their shows. Traditionally, simple broadsides, measuring from six or eight inches to nearly three feet high, were produced using movable type and often included woodcut illustrations. These ads relayed the necessary information about upcoming performances, but did little to create excitement. Then came the 1860s, and everything changed with an explosion of color.

RIGHT: **1908** While traveling through India, disasters were a way of life. On his way to Hyderabad, Carter received a telegram stating that a flood had wiped out much of the city. A quick change of plan rerouted the company to Pune, and on the way there their train was derailed—a lot to endure for a one-night engagement.

OPPOSITE: **1905** Hundreds of these seven-by-nine-foot posters were produced by the Illinois Lithograph Company for 40 cents each. By comparison, a ticket to the show cost between 25 cents and one dollar. With posters being the lifeblood of any touring show, crates of them traveled with Carter all over the world.

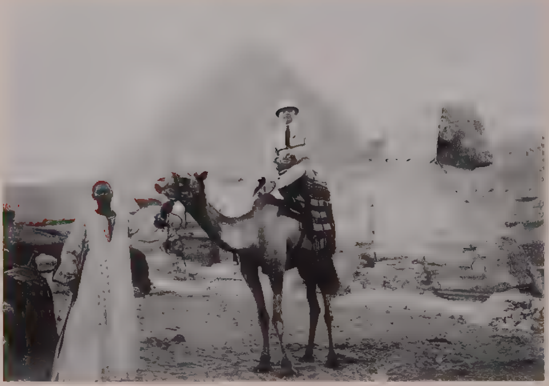



CARTER
THE MYSTERIOUS
ILLINOIS

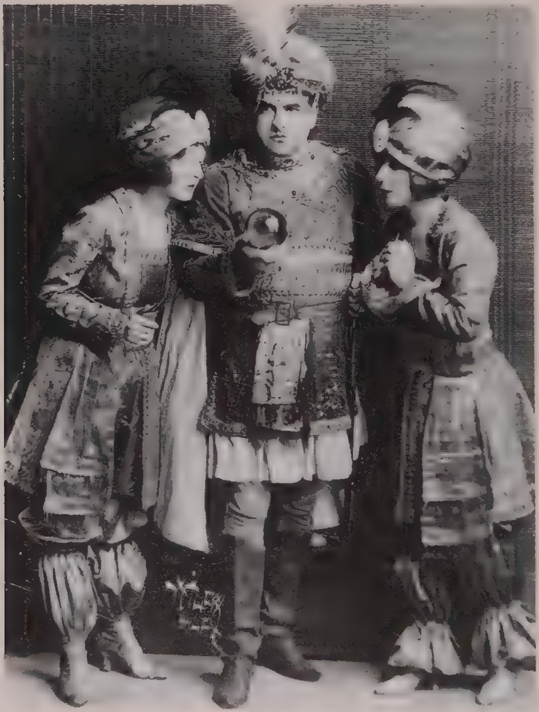

CARTER
THE GREAT
SWEEPS THE SECRETS OF THE SPHINX AND MARVELS OF THE TOMB OF OLD KING TUT TO THE MODERN WORLD

LEFT: **1926** Seventeen years after the photo of Carter on a camel, below, was taken in Egypt, the Otis Lithograph Company used it as inspiration for this poster. The text at the bottom capitalizes on the global interest in the discovery of Tutankhamen's tomb four years earlier. Carter's initial order was for 5,225 posters—enough, he hoped, to sustain him for the duration of his next world tour.

BELOW: **1909** The photo of Carter on the camel was taken at the conclusion of his first world tour. During the course of 18 months he carried his ponderous show to theaters in Australia, New Zealand, Tasmania, the Philippines, China, Japan, Java, Burma, and India.



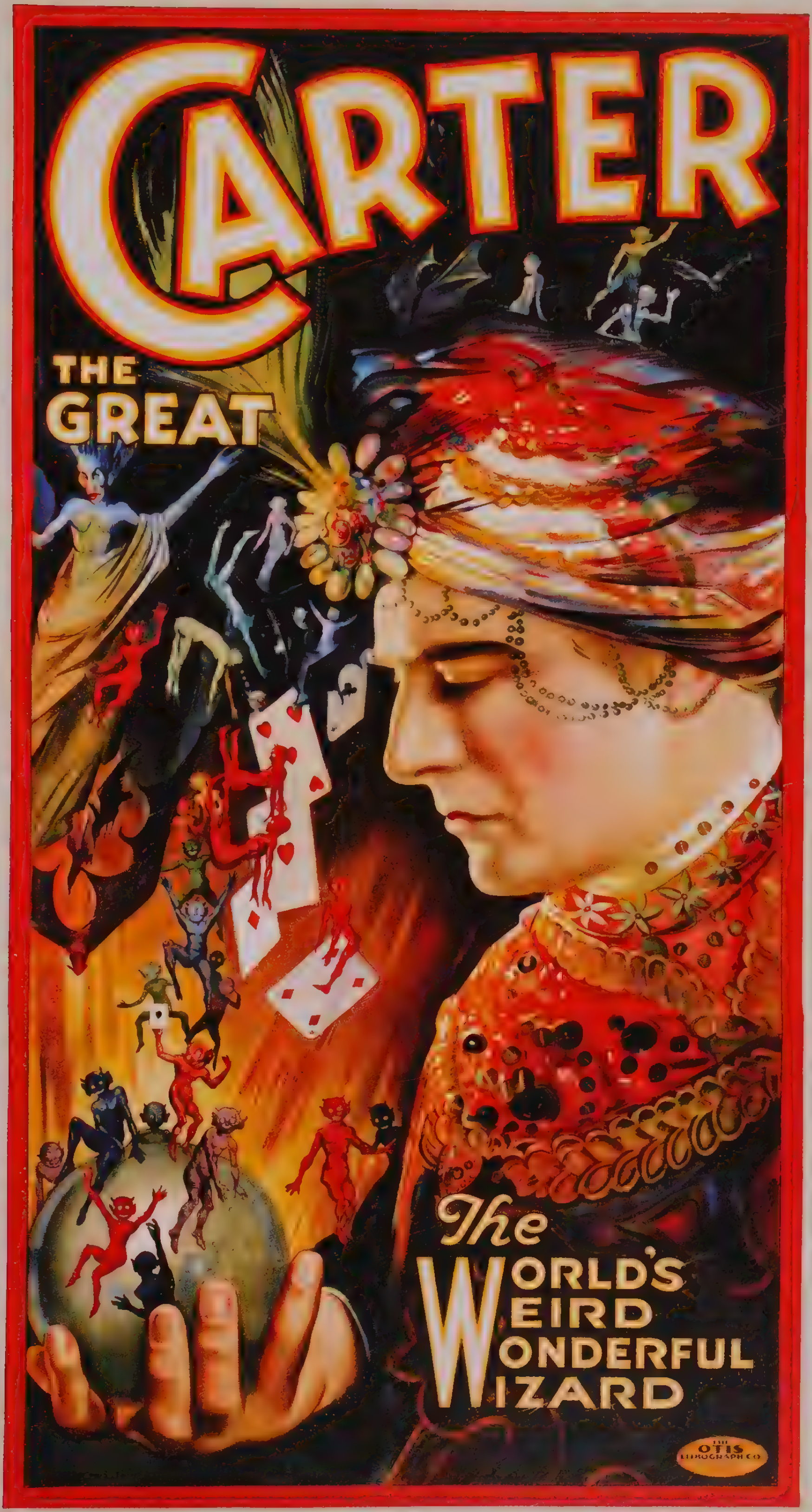
BELOW AND OPPOSITE: **1922 and 1926** This portrait of Carter dressed as an Indian maharaja with two assistants was not taken in the mysterious East, but rather in a photo studio in Salt Lake City, Utah. The image inspired the 1926 poster on the opposite page. Having completed five trips around the globe, Carter now thought of himself as "the World's Weird Wonderful Wizard."

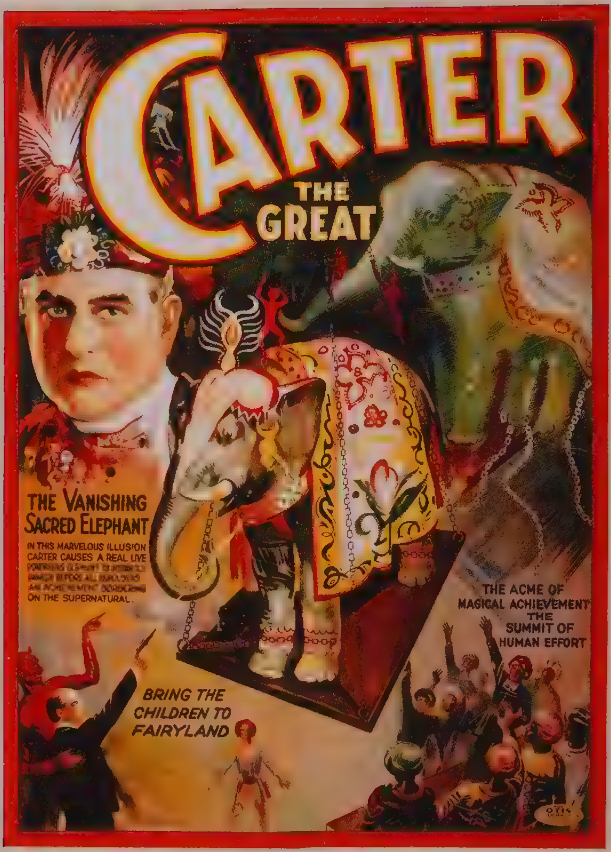


Huge Posters Put Magic on the Map

In Paris, Jules Chéret adapted the art of stone lithography, transferring ink from smooth slabs of limestone onto paper, to produce large, colorful advertisements. Huge lithography companies opened shop around the world to meet the burgeoning demand for outdoor advertisements, from small, 14-by-22-inch window cards to gigantic, bill board-size posters 9 feet high by 25 feet wide. The arrival of lithography marked a dramatic shift in advertising from written descriptions to full-color illustrations of magical effects. More often than not, the magical effects depicted in posters were far more amazing in print than they ever were onstage. Here, in vibrant colors, a woman could be seen not just floating up into the air, but right out over the heads of the stunned spectators. Now, instead of having to walk up to a broadside and carefully read about an upcoming attraction, anyone walking or driving down the street couldn't miss the massive display of color that—with a good dose of fantasy—illustrated some of the incredible mysteries that awaited.

Simultaneous with the emergence of the great touring illusion shows was the growth of vaudeville. One critical difference between them, however, was that vaudevillians were generally at the mercy of the circuit owners—the

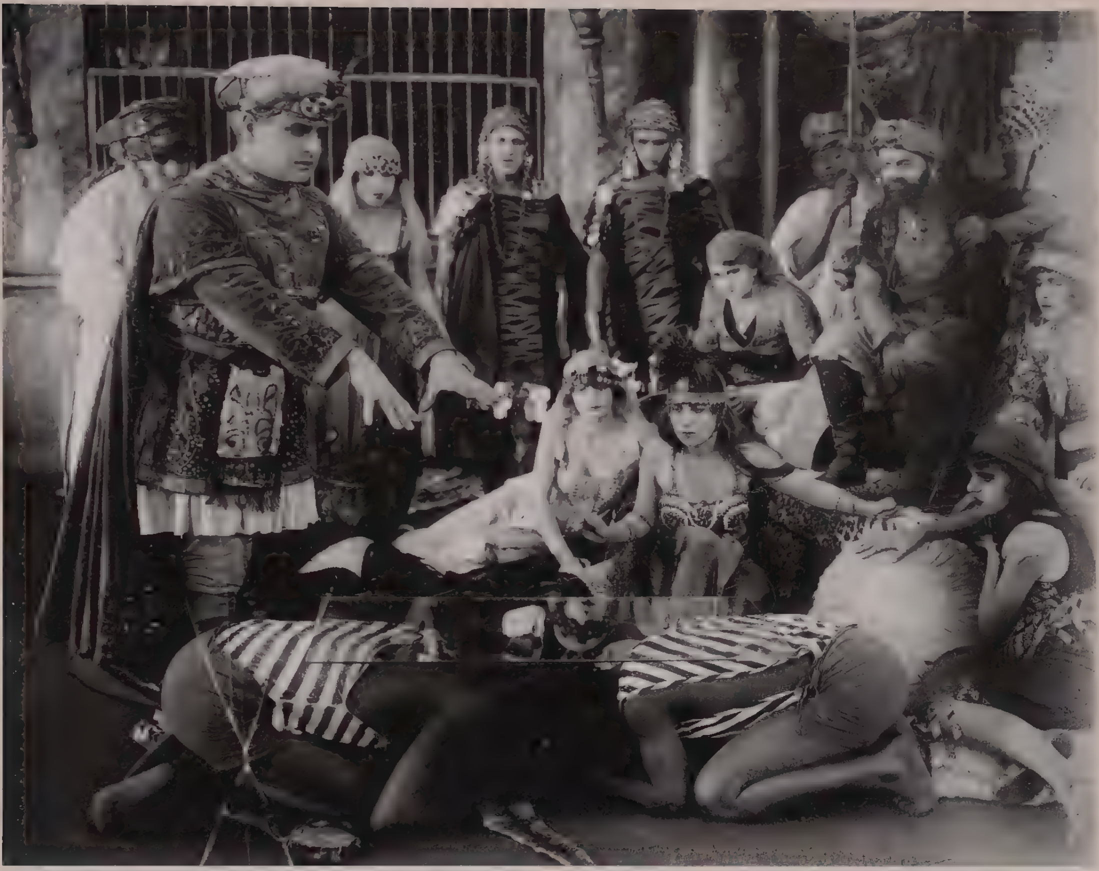

CARTER
THE GREAT
The
WORLD'S
WEIRD
WONDERFUL
WIZARD
THE OTIS LITHOGRAPH CO.


CARTER
THE GREAT
THE VANISHING
SACRED ELEPHANT
IN THIS MARVELOUS ILLUSION
CARTER CAUSES A REAL LIVE
VANISH BEFORE ALL BEHOLDERS
AN ACHIEVEMENT BORDERING
ON THE SUPERNATURAL.
THE ACME OF
MAGICAL ACHIEVEMENT
THE
SUMMIT OF
HUMAN EFFORT
BRING THE
CHILDREN TO
FAIRYLAND
OTIS

PAGES 326–327: **1921** Though films could not yet speak, by 1921 it was clear that movies had become wildly successful. This photo was taken during the filming of *The Lion's Bride*, a movie starring and produced, directed, and written by Charles Carter. Because Carter had no experience in any of these disciplines, it is fortunate that the film was never released.

LEFT: **1926** Upon seeing this poster for the first time, Carter dashed off a letter to the people responsible for its design at Otis Lithograph. He wrote, "The elephant eight-sheet you have made into a money getter. I am sure as soon as my multitudinous friends about the world put their peepers on this sheet they will run posthaste to my box office with their golden elusive shekels, entreating me in suppliant cajolery to relieve them of their coin in exchange for the rare privilege of feasting their senses on my many new mysteries, which your painstaking efforts on my behalf have so graphically and seductively emblazoned forth in myriad greens and reds and purples royal."

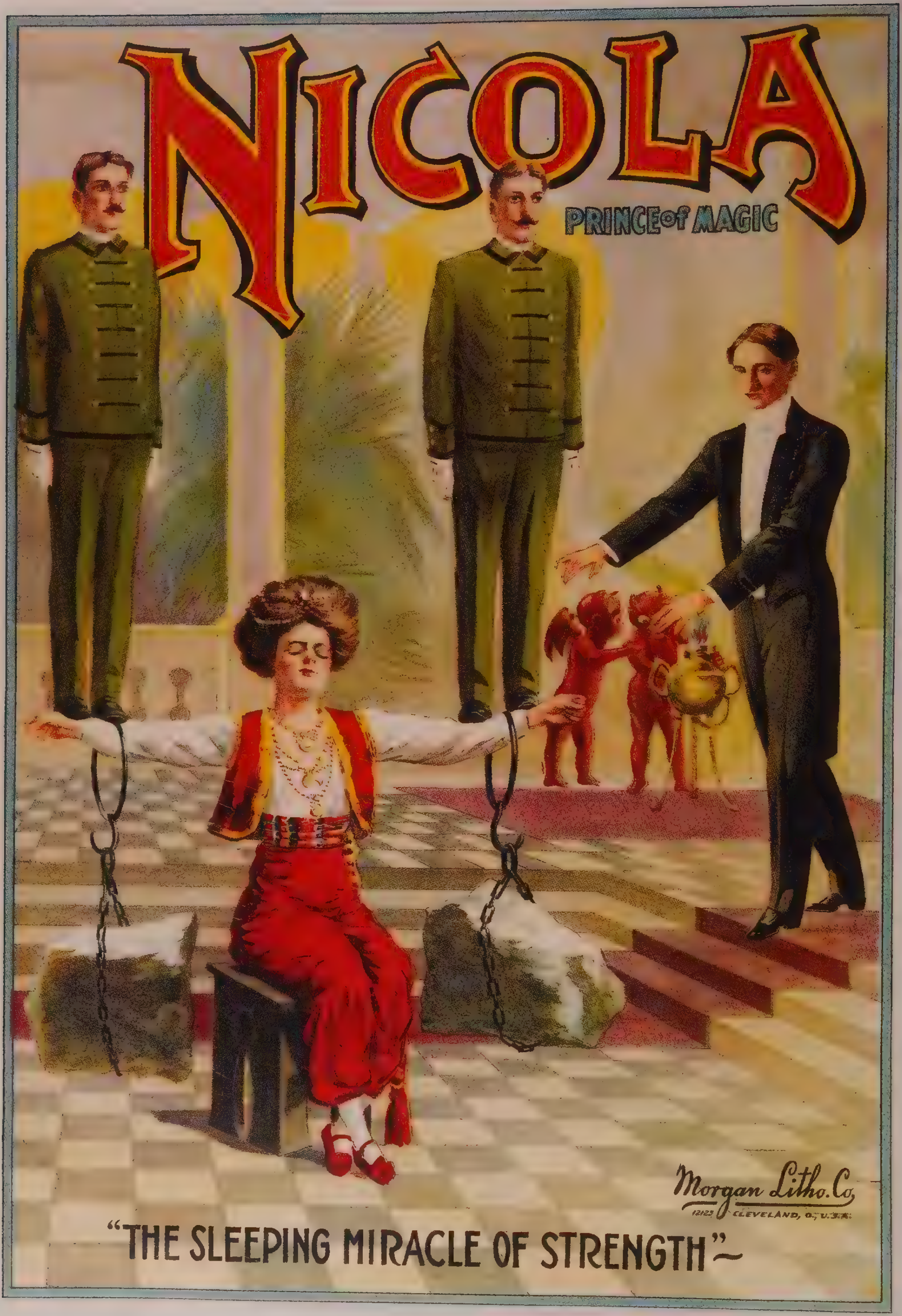
A REAL TWO-HEADED BABY
CARTER
THE GREAT
TEMPLE of MYSTERY

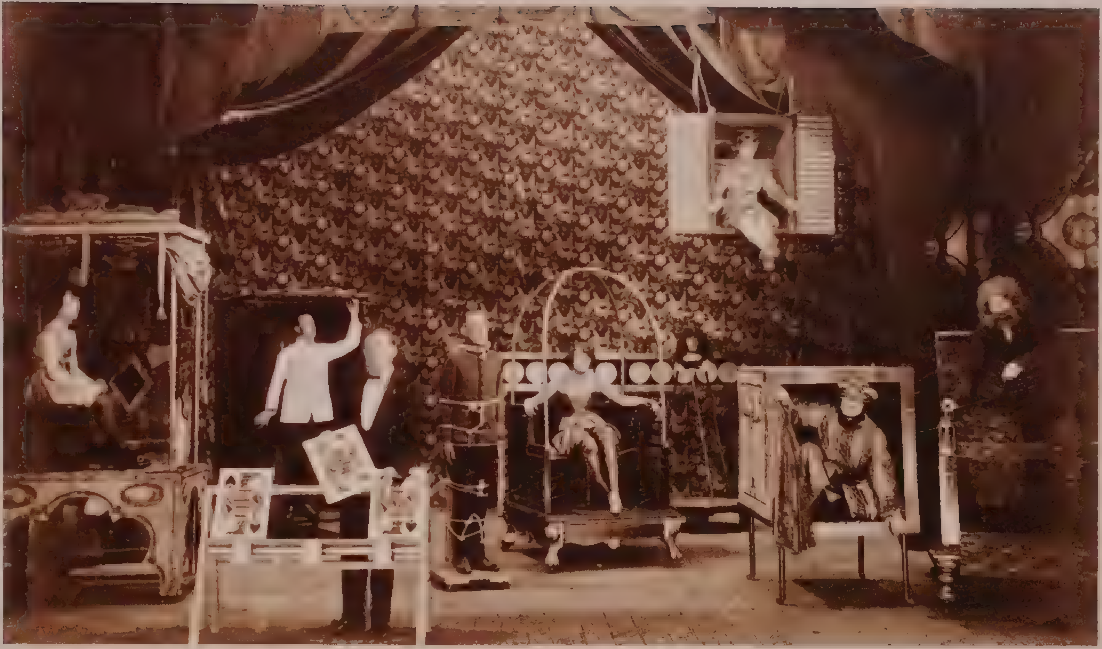


ABOVE: **1921** A still from Carter's unreleased film *The Lion's Bride*. It shows the Spirit Rapping Hand tapping out answers on a sheet of glass supported by two "slave" actors.

OPPOSITE BOTTOM: **1933** After constructing a 700-seat theater for the Chicago World's Fair, Carter wrote, "If people come to the fair, which I suspect they will in great numbers, I should clean up a quarter of a million simoleons." People did come, but they spent their money on Sally Rand's seductive dance rather than Carter's magic show. The Temple of Mystery soon became a Chinese restaurant.

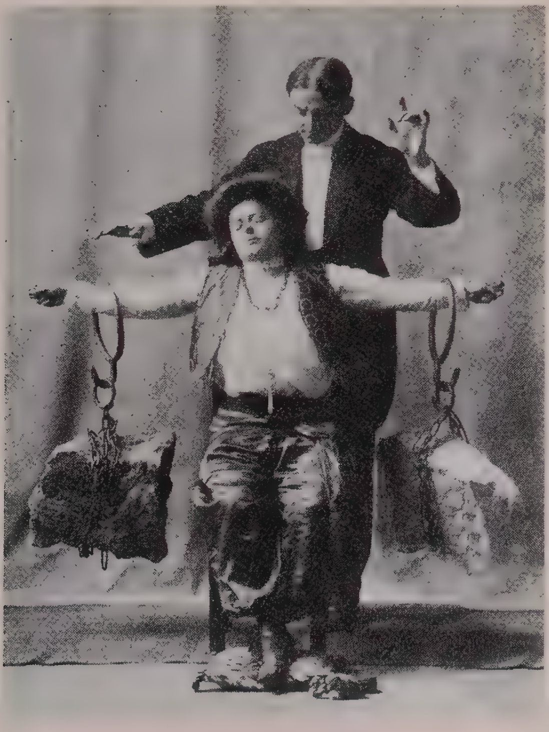
Shuberts, B. F. Keith, and Alexander Pantages, to name just a few. The owners decided whom to book, where the acts would go, how much time they would spend onstage, and how much they would be paid. By taking his own show on the road, the magician made all his own decisions and reaped all the profits, but suffered all the losses, too. Going it alone required a special blend of desire, showmanship, and the nerve to undertake such an expensive and daunting venture. But it offered a way to earn a living by performing magic on one's own terms, far from the dictates of a circuit manager, while at the same time seeing the world. It was a way to reach virgin audiences, who hadn't already seen dozens of magicians in vaudeville. By taking the road less traveled to distant corners of the world, each and every trick appeared brand new. As early as the 1840s and 1850s, there had been magicians—such as Jacobs from England, and Scotland's John Henry Anderson (the Great Wizard of the North)—who toured the world with full-evening shows. But in sheer size, these shows paled in comparison to what was to come during magic's golden age.


NICOLA
PRINCE of MAGIC
Morgan Litho. Co
12123 CLEVELAND, O., U.S.A.
"THE SLEEPING MIRACLE OF STRENGTH"~



OPPOSITE AND BELOW **ca. 1910** Young William Nicol started performing in Illinois, and in 1907 he became the Great Nicola. The popularity of theatrical hypnotism led to the creation of this illusion, which seemingly demonstrated how ordinary people gain superhuman abilities while under hypnosis. The photograph, below, "proves" the accuracy of Nicola's poster. But Zoki, as Nicola called it, was actually a stage illusion disguised as hypnotism.

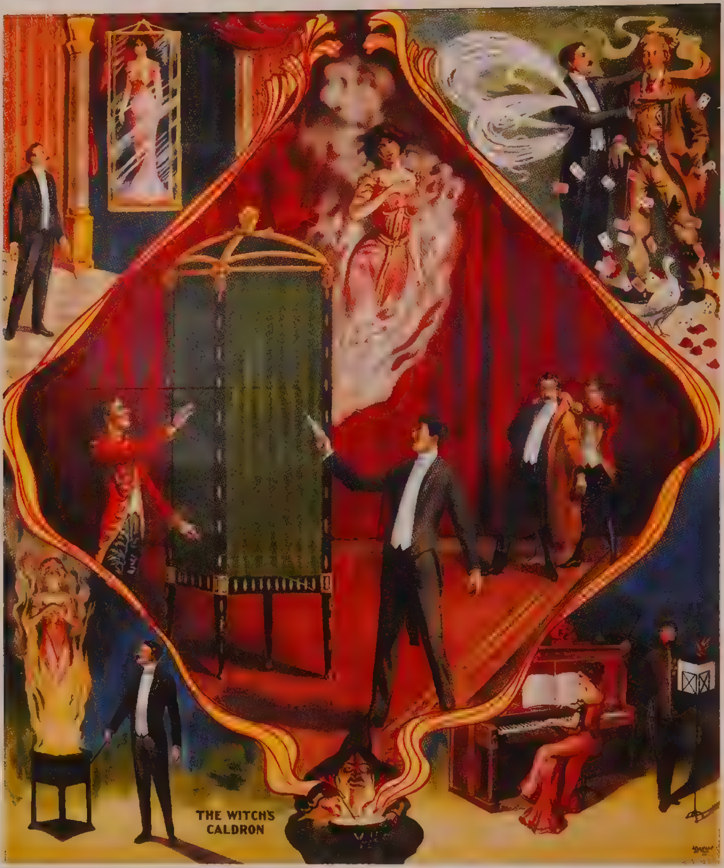
ABOVE: **ca. 1922** Between shows, Nicola wheeled part of his vast collection of equipment onto the stage for this photograph. It provides a wonderful view of his apparatus, assistants, and costumes. Nicola is seen with the giant cards used in his stage-size version of the con game Three-Card Monte.



Battling Their Way Around the Globe

A classic example of the grand touring illusionist was American magician Charles Joseph Carter, a.k.a. Carter the Great. Between 1907 and 1936, Carter undertook no fewer than seven trips around the world, with massive shows that included many of the greatest illusions ever invented. When possible, these effects were purchased from the inventor, and when not possible, they were pilfered. Carter learned the secret to Harry Kellar's legendary Floating Lady by hiring two of Kellar's former assistants who'd had experience with the illusion (p. 321). Kellar couldn't complain too loudly, since he himself had used the same tactic, hiring an employee of the illusion's creator, John Nevil Maskelyne, to divulge the trick's secrets. Other mysteries were acquired by Carter more legitimately, through purchases from Martinka's Magical Palace in New York City and Floyd Thayer's Studio of Magic in Los Angeles. For 30 years, in the face of hurricanes, epidemics, floods, train wrecks, and endless lawsuits, Carter battled his way around the globe, and for his efforts became a very wealthy man.

During the 1910s and '20s, every touring illusionist was competing against silent film stars, such as Rudolph Valentino and Douglas Fairbanks. This was stiff competition for



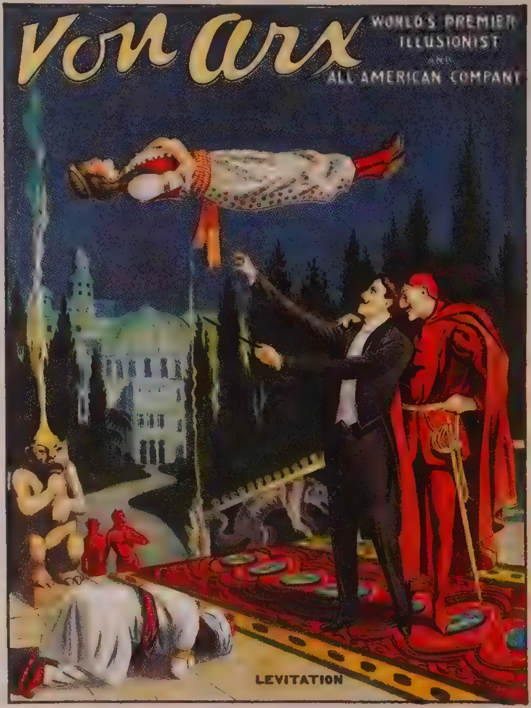
LEFT: 1911 The levitation of a human being can be graphically illustrated on a poster. Other effects are not so easily depicted. This detail from an enormous seven-by-nine-foot Von Arx poster shows a number of effects in bright colors and varied images.

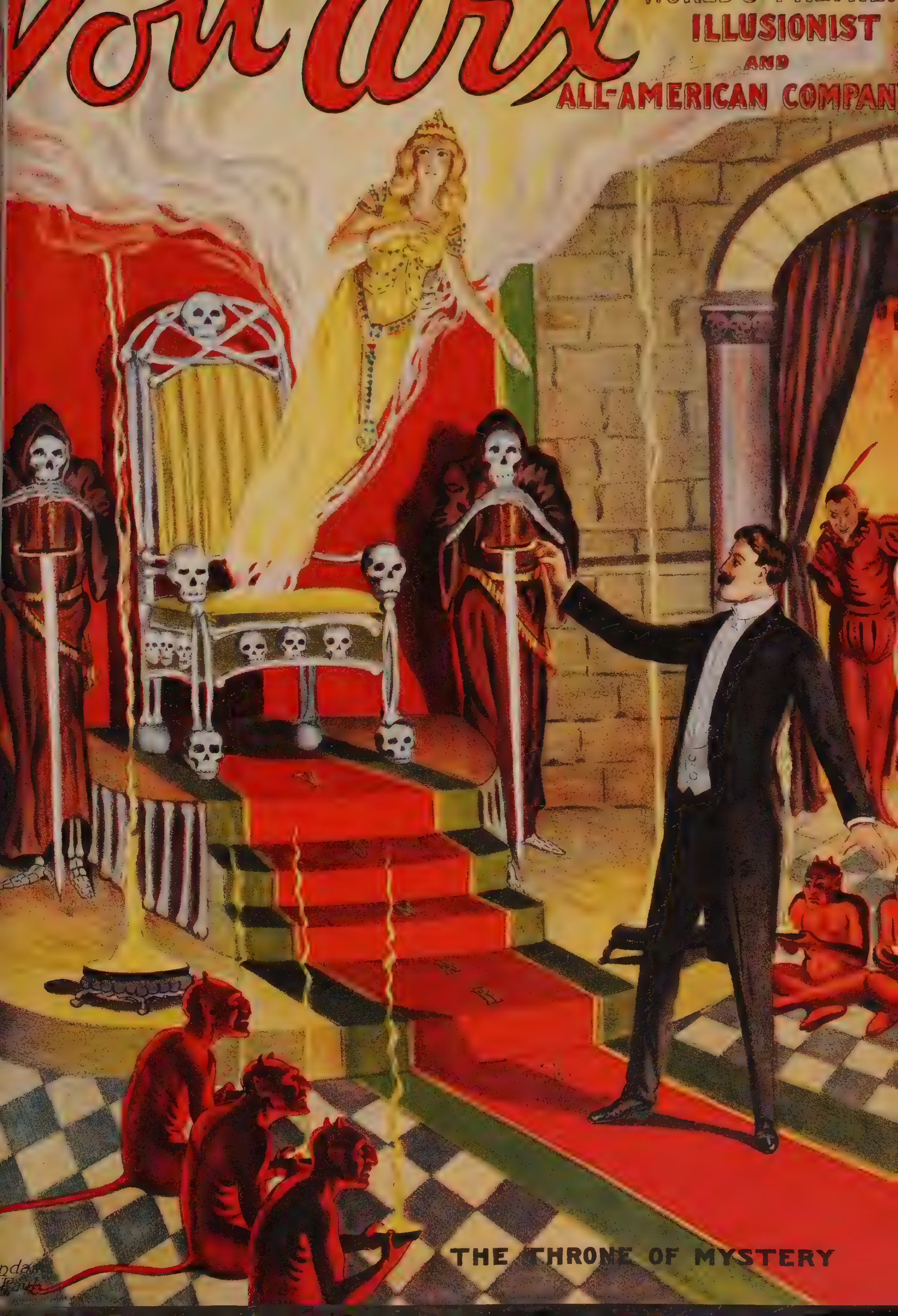
OPPOSITE: 1911 During Nicola's first world tour, his brother Charles Nicol worked as his stage manager. Business was so profitable that they decided to send out a second show with Charles as the magician. It was billed as "Von Arx: World's Premier Illusionist and His All-American Company," as featured in this poster.

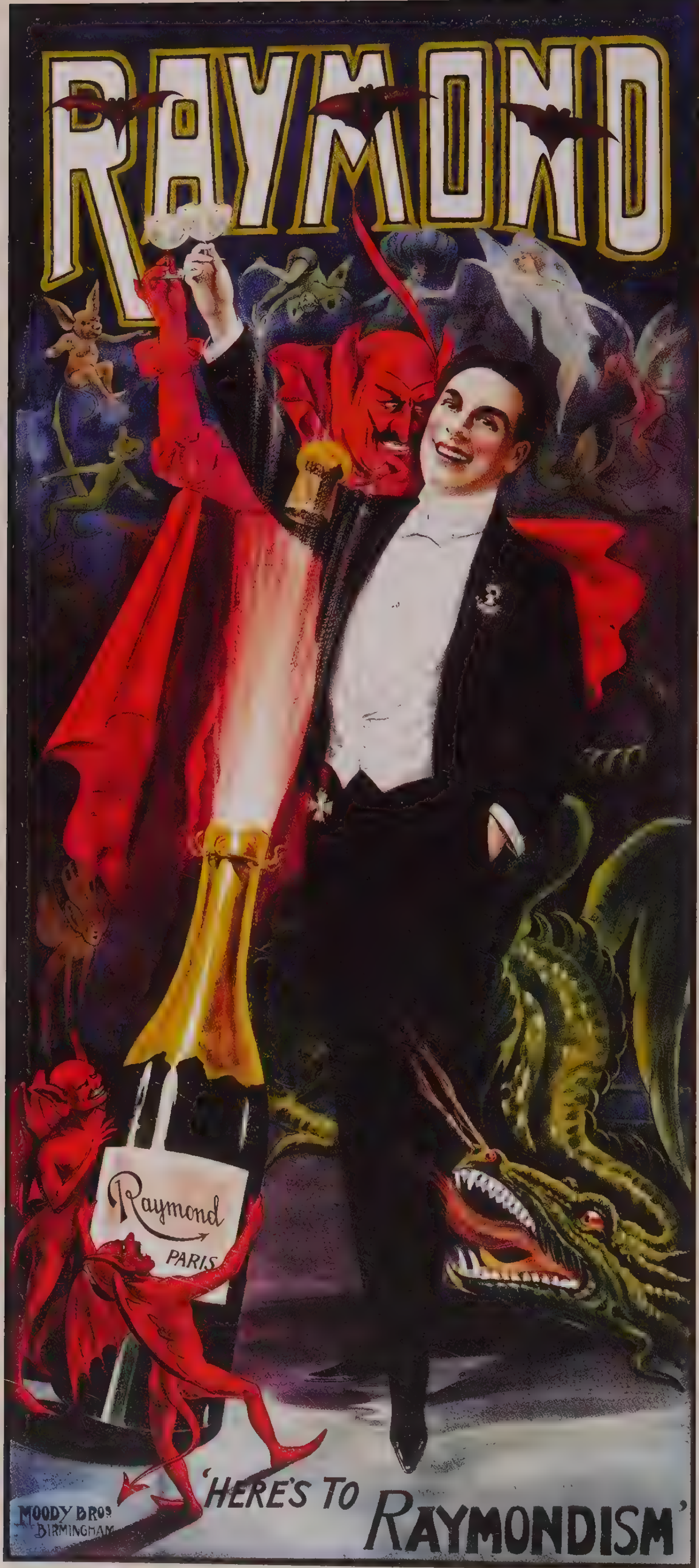
BELOW: 1911 Taking a page from P. T. Barnum's book, magicians were not afraid to exaggerate their claims. The lady who defied gravity in Von Arx's show did not float under an open sky, nor rise to a height of 10 feet. The magician's job was to make the audience believe she had.

a short, stout Midwesterner with a prominent proboscis named Will Nicola. Lacking the appearance of a Hollywood leading man, he relied on showmanship, a winning personality, and incredible magic to win over his audiences. Nicola enjoyed a long career abroad that saw him visit most of the civilized countries on Earth. While touring Australia in 1911, he decided to send out a second-unit show with his brother at the helm, under the name Von Arx. Only when war broke out in Europe, in 1939, did Nicola make the decision to return home. With his entire show packed into the hold of the steamship *Sirdhana*, the company began what was to become a long journey back to America. Before the ship had even cleared Singapore Harbor, it struck a submerged mine that blew a gaping hole in the hull. Nicola's company of startled wonder-workers scurried into the lifeboats and watched helplessly as the work of their lifetimes disappeared into the sea.

One obstacle that faced all globe-trotting illusionists was that of spoken language. Shows that lasted between two and three hours contained a great deal of patter; to fully enjoy a performance, the audience needed to understand what was being said. The Great Raymond (born Maurice Saunders in Akron, Ohio) had the good fortune of being fluent in both English and Spanish. During the




Von Arx
ILLUSIONIST
AND
ALL-AMERICAN COMPAN
THE THRONE OF MYSTERY


RAYMOND
Raymond
PARIS
MOODY BROS
BIRMINGHAM
'HERE'S TO RAYMONDISM'

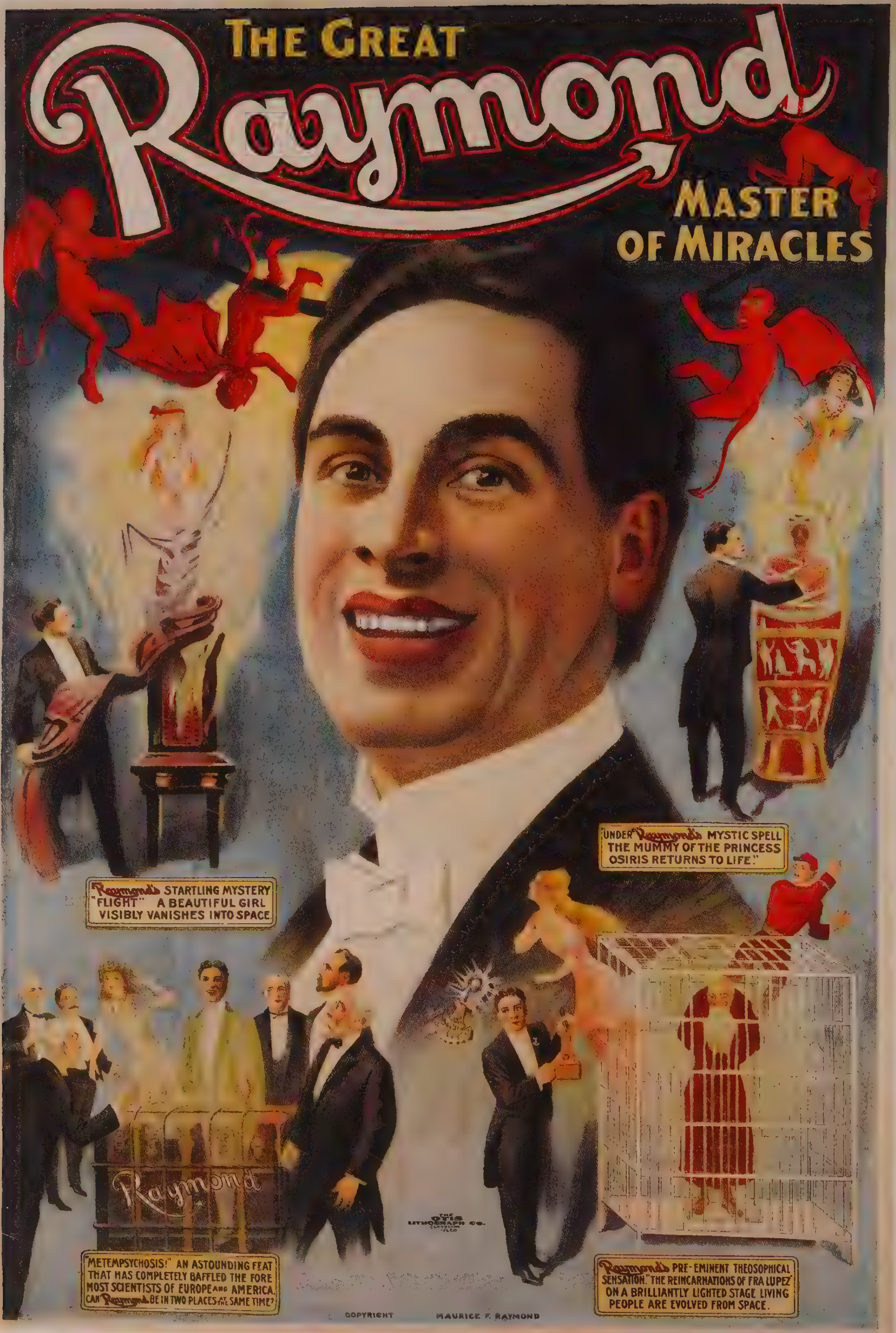
LEFT: **1910** The multilingualism of American Maurice Saunders (a.k.a. the Great Raymond) allowed him to communicate with audiences all over the world. This 10-by-18-inch window card, replicated here in approximately its original size, effectively transports the viewer into an unimaginable world of creatures, imps, and the Devil himself.

years of his international travels, between 1907 and 1930, he enjoyed his greatest success—and longest tenure—in Spanish-speaking countries.

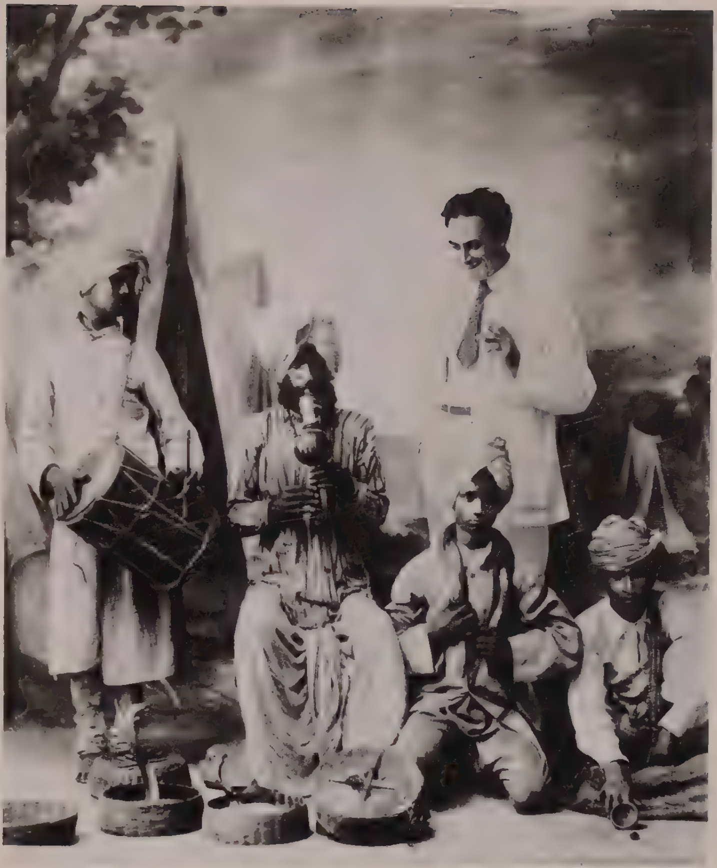
Perhaps the most versatile performer to travel the world during magic's golden age was David Tobias Bamberg, the sixth and final member of Holland's Bamberg dynasty. This legendary family of magicians included Eliaser Bamberg (1760–1833), who lost a leg during a shipboard explosion early in his life. Ever the opportunist, Eliaser had his wooden leg fitted with a secret compartment in which he could conceal tools of his trade. He came to be known as the Devil on One Leg, and his audiences never realized it was his false appendage that was enhancing his devilish powers. David's father, Theodore Bamberg

ABOVE: **ca. 1920** The magician's workshop—a place that, like the magician's tricks, is cloaked in secrecy. It is here that new illusions are designed, built, tested, and rebuilt. The ideal worker here has a thorough knowledge of magic principles, is mechanically inclined, and is able to work with wood, metal, and electricity.

LEFT: **ca. 1920** Prior to each performance, the magician's dressing room was a hub of activity. Clothes were pressed and makeup was applied while a constant stream of visitors reported on ticket sales, prop repairs, and personal problems. On top of it all, Raymond is seen here dictating a letter to his traveling secretary.

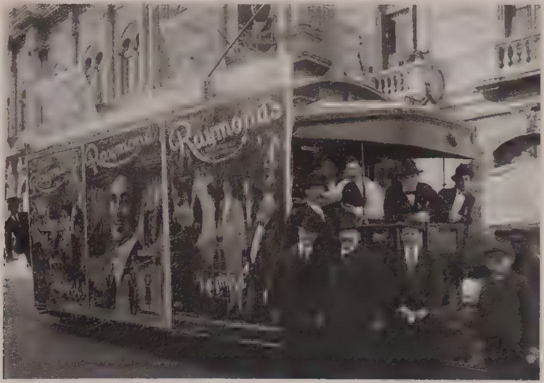

THE GREAT
Raymond
MASTER
OF MIRACLES
UNDER Raymond's MYSTIC SPELL THE MUMMY OF THE PRINCESS OSIRIS RETURNS TO LIFE."
Raymond's STARTLING MYSTERY "FLIGHT" A BEAUTIFUL GIRL VISIBLY VANISHES INTO SPACE.
Raymond
"METEMPSYCHOSIS!" AN ASTOUNDING FEAT THAT HAS COMPLETELY BAFFLED THE FORE MOST SCIENTISTS OF EUROPE AND AMERICA. CAN Raymond BE IN TWO PLACES AT THE SAME TIME?
THE OTIS LITHOGRAPH CO. CLEVELAND
Raymond's PRE-EMINENT THEOSOPHICAL SENSATION. "THE REINCARNATIONS OF FRA LUPEZ" ON A BRILLIANTLY LIGHTED STAGE LIVING PEOPLE ARE EVOLVED FROM SPACE.
COPYRIGHT MAURICE F. RAYMOND

OPPOSITE: **ca. 1920** Early in his career Raymond specialized in escapes, which, needless to say, did not endear him to the king of the escapologists, Harry Houdini. Featured on this poster is Raymond's trunk escape, Metempsychosis, a direct copy of Houdini's original version, Metamorphosis, which was developed in 1893.

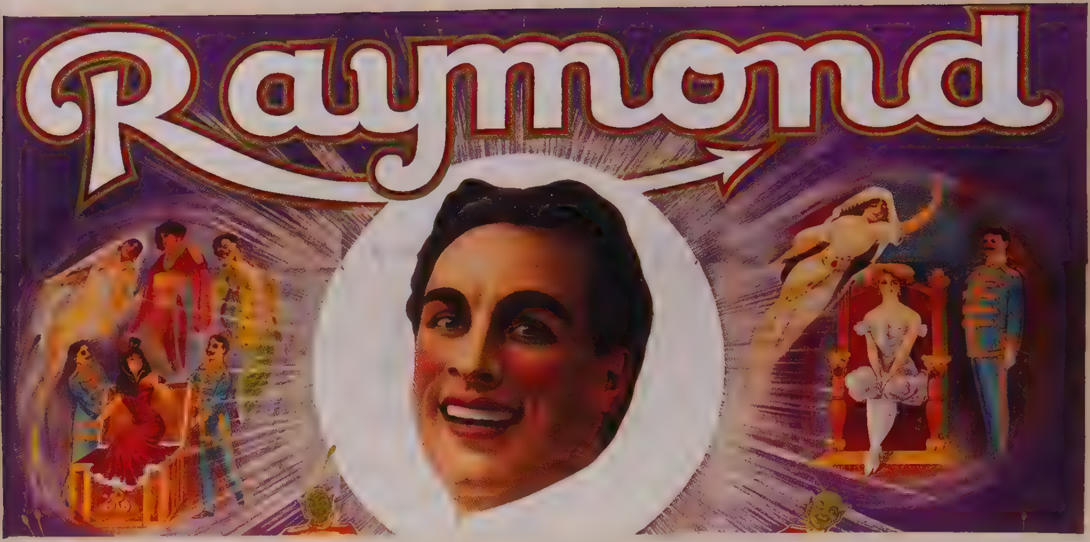


RIGHT: **ca. 1925** Despite the fact that Raymond visited India on more than one occasion, this advertising photo is another of his grand illusions. What appears to be Raymond mingling with a group of fakirs on a street in India is actually a staged photo taken in front of a painted backdrop at the Silver & Friedman Photo Studio in Chicago. An exotic image such as this would prove most appealing to the general public.

(1875–1963), known professionally as Okito, was a brilliant inventor, builder, and performer, who specialized in Japanese-style magic (p. 357). His son David learned the business by working first in his father's show and later as an assistant for the Great Raymond. Still later, he worked with Chang (born Juan José Pablo Jesorum), a Chinese-Panamanian illusionist who toured throughout South America in the character of a Chinese magician. Eventually David Bamberg took the name Fu Manchu and built his own magnificent, full-evening show with a Chinese motif (pp. 358–359). He staffed his company with beautiful girls and talented comedians, which resulted in a dazzling and hilariously funny production. Bamberg's Fu Manchu character epitomized the internationalism that had always been a part of magic. When Fu Manchu appeared in New York City in 1937, it was pointed out that he was a Dutchman playing a Chinese character who spoke Spanish to an American audience in Spanish Harlem.



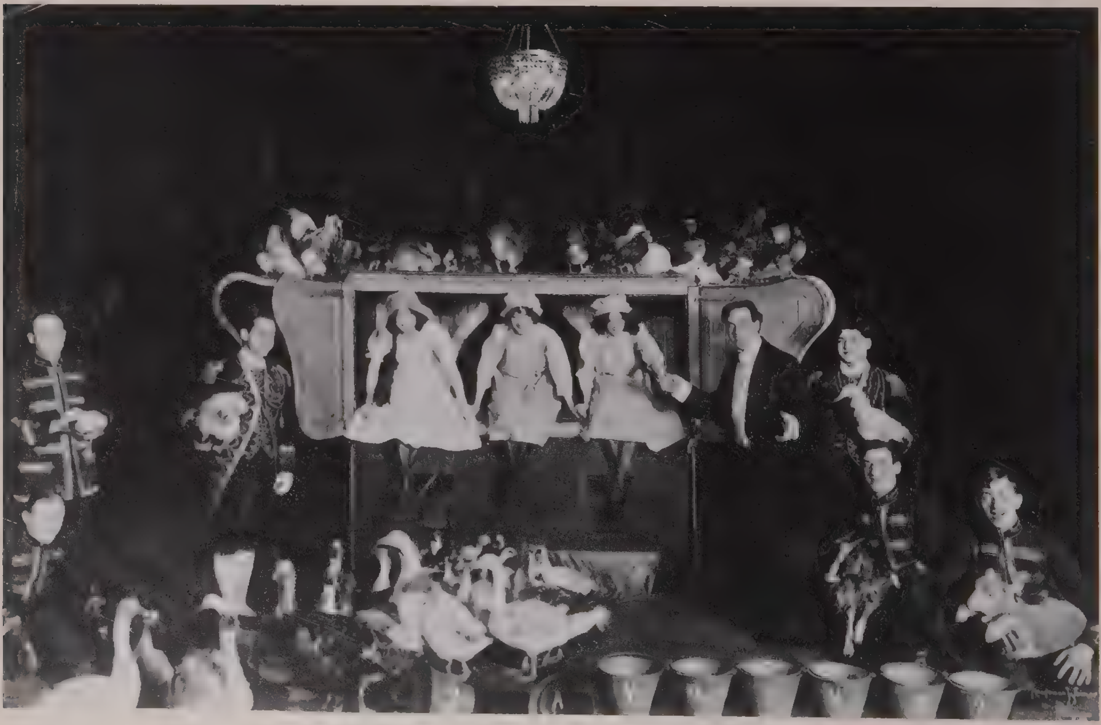
RIGHT: **ca. 1920** With streetcars traversing a city's main thoroughfares all day and most of the night, there was no better place to display one's posters. This streetcar is a traveling billboard for Raymond's engagement in Colón, Panama. Raymond can be seen at the front left with his musical director next to him.

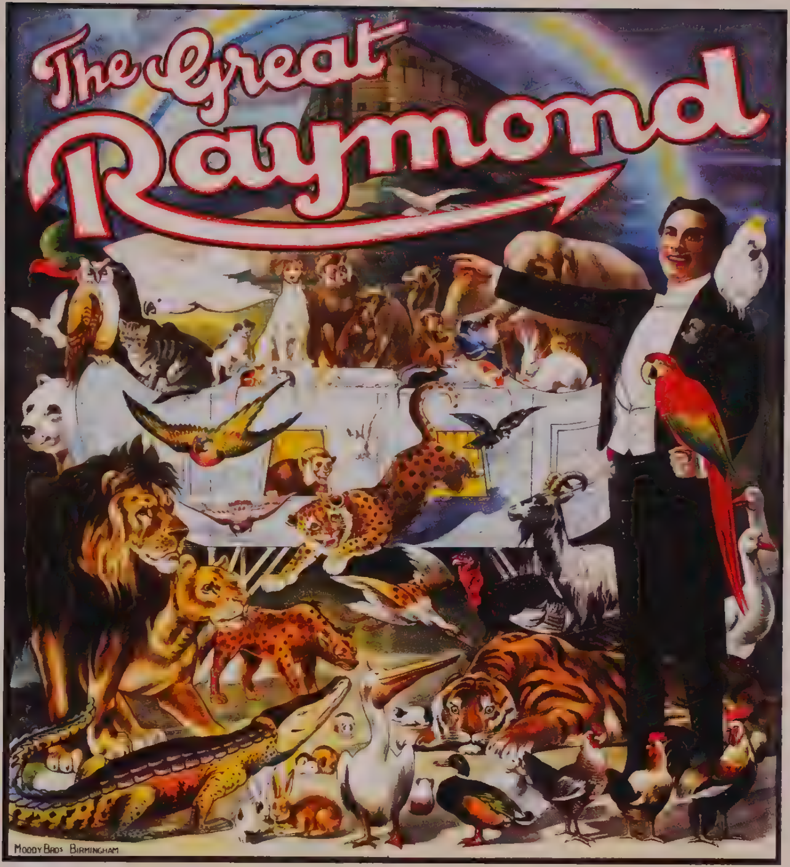


ABOVE: **1910** Newspaper reviews were important tools for selling one's show to theater managers. These lines from the Paris edition of the *London Daily Mail* were worth their weight in gold, or diamonds, like the one illuminating this poster: "Mr. Raymond is more than a mere illusionist; he enlivens all that he does with humor and a keen wit ... His vivacious gaiety, magnetic personality, and easy command of French charm his audience almost as much as the many marvels of his performance."

BELOW: **1912** Even if it fell short of the promises made by Raymond's poster, the Noah's Ark illusion was still a spectacular effect. A stage full of ducks, chickens, rabbits, turkeys, a goat, and some lovely ladies appeared from the previously empty ark. The antics of the untrained livestock were unforgettable.

OPPOSITE: **1912** The Noah's Ark illusion was invented by Austrian magician Chevalier Ernest Thorn and performed by most illusionists of the day. This action-filled lithograph showing lions, tigers, elephants, leopards, and a crocodile bursting out of Raymond's ark is a bit of an exaggeration, but it certainly succeeded in selling tickets to the show.





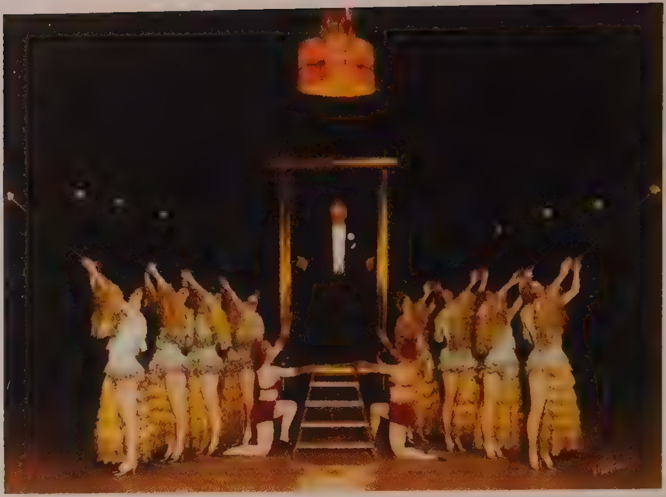
The Roller-Coaster Existence of Life on the Road

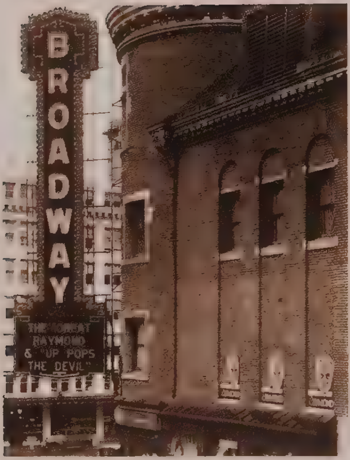
For all of the touring illusionists, life on the road was a roller-coaster existence. In one city, their shows would be heralded as the greatest theatrical events in recent history, with every seat sold; in the next, they would play to half-empty houses. It was an expensive game to play, with some winning and many others losing. One such unfortunate conjurer was Frederick Bronson, who, as Frederick Bancroft, dreamed of being the next Alexander Herrmann, America's foremost magician at the time. Bancroft lavished the fortune he had earned in dentistry and real estate on magical apparatus, scenery, costumes, and advertising lithographs (p. 356). In describing his illusions, his 1895 press book claimed, "His masterpieces in this line are the creations of his own clever brain." The truth was that Bancroft was an inexperienced showman presenting tricks that an entire generation had already seen performed by Herrmann the Great. For three seasons, Bancroft gave it his best effort by creating stunning posters and lavish stage sets, but a critic writing for the *New York Clipper* accurately and succinctly identified his problem: "Mr. Bancroft is not equal to his surroundings." At the age of 30, while performing in Charleston, South Carolina, Bancroft contracted typhoid fever and died.

Bancroft's ultimate failure is a fine example of how becoming a magician is not something that can be purchased. There are no shortcuts to mastering the myriad aspects of a successful magic show. In the same way a student pilot accumulates hours in the air, a budding magician needs stage time to learn timing, showmanship, and presentational skills. There is no substitute for standing in front of a live audience and listening to their reactions to each line of patter and the climax of each trick. Audiences seldom lie.

One illusionist who elected to remain in America while so many of his fellow magicians traveled the world was Harry Blackstone. Growing up in Chicago, a visit to one of Harry Kellar's legendary shows sealed his fate. Blackstone's career extended from the 1910s all the way to the television era. His full head of wavy white hair made him instantly recognizable to the public, with whom he loved to mingle and perform impromptu tricks (p. 345). During a performance in Decatur, Illinois, in 1942, one of Blackstone's assistants whispered to him that the building next to the theater was on fire. To avert a certain disaster, the quick-thinking magician announced that the next illusion was so big that, in order to fully appreciate the effect, it would be necessary for the audience to adjourn

RIGHT: **ca. 1940** For years Raymond opened his show by appearing inside this metal-frame cabinet. The addition of 10 lovely assistants scantily clad in beautiful costumes and announcing Raymond's arrival with trumpets turned an otherwise simple trick into a spectacular and colorful opening number.





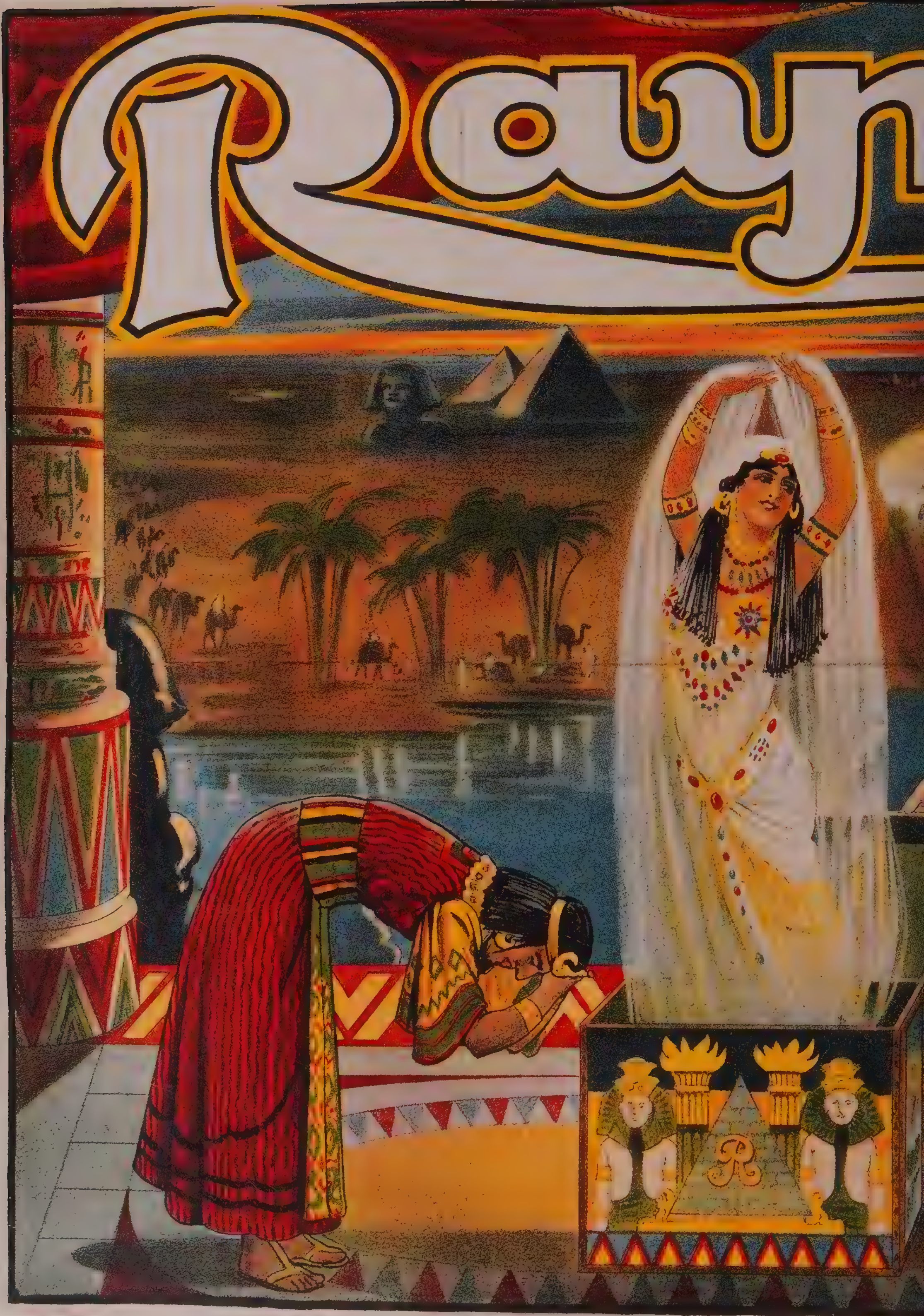
LEFT: **1931** Most illusionists who appeared in the United States during the Depression played in what were known as presentation houses. Converted vaudeville theaters such as the Broadway, shown here, would stage a 50-minute live show between screenings of the featured film. With up to five shows per day, it was a grueling schedule for the performers.

to the street. Row by row, the spectators calmly exited the theater. Only when they reached the safety of the street did they realize that the Great Blackstone had likely saved their lives. Magic shows offer an environment where mechanical malfunctions and human error can flourish, and illusionists spend their lives confronting these onstage disasters. Experience teaches them how to quickly develop contingency plans that will prevent the audience from realizing that some part of their trick has gone awry. This ability to calmly stare catastrophe in the eye is what allowed Blackstone to instantly devise a strategy that prevented a deadly calamity.

A number of illusionists found comfortable homes in the circus ring, where they presented their mysteries in an environment normally unwelcome by magicians—that is, while completely surrounded by the audience.

RIGHT: **ca. 1935** The Teatro Nacional is filled to capacity for Raymond's show in Havana, Cuba. You might suspect that this is the view of a magician during his performance, but when the house lights are dimmed and the spotlights are shining in the performer's eyes, he sees nothing but pitch darkness.

OPPOSITE: **ca. 1930** Female assistants added sex appeal to a magic show as they magically appeared, vanished, and floated in the air. Backstage, however, it was all business. Rules included "No eating, smoking, or loud talking... Uniforms pressed, shoes polished... No flirting or unseemly conduct by the male or female contingent."



Ray
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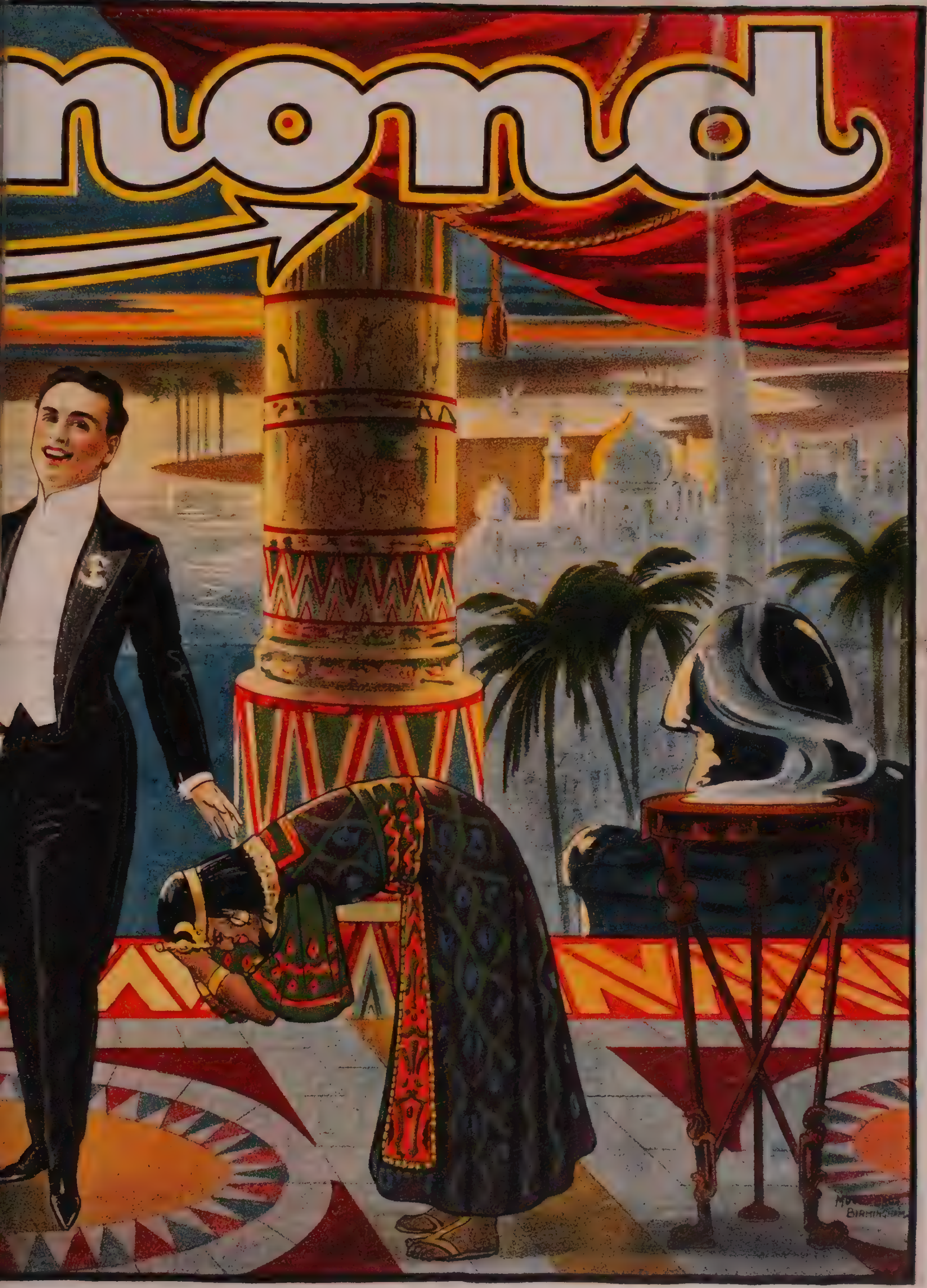
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BIRMINGHAM

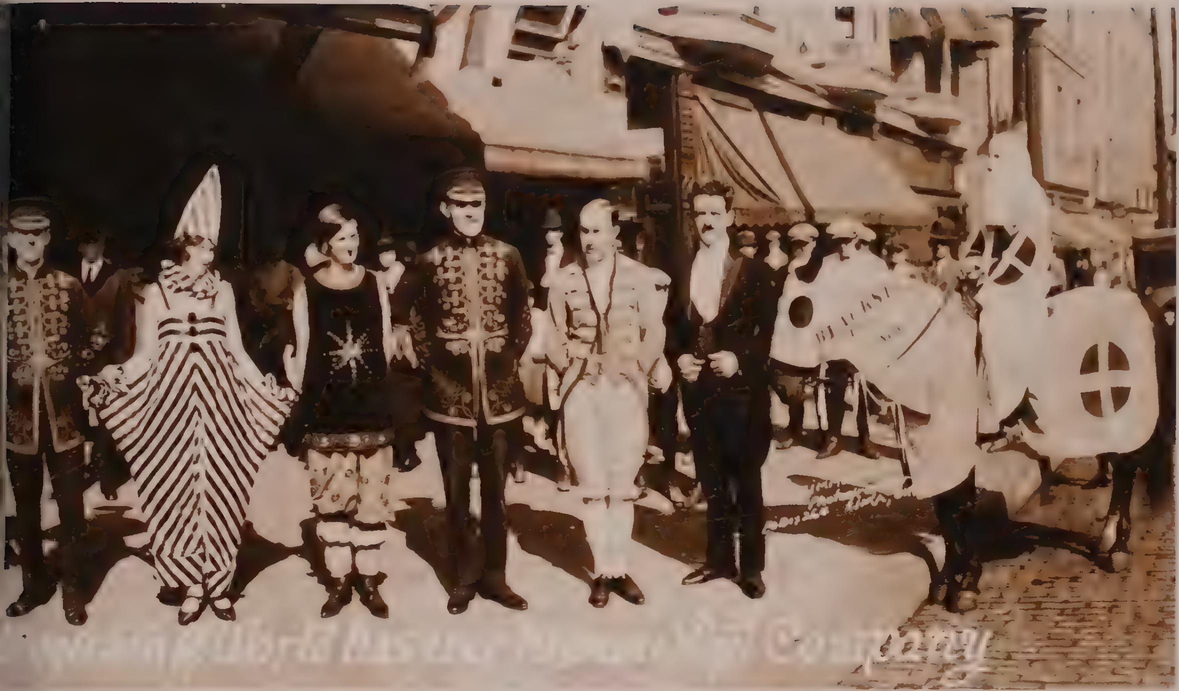
"Blackstone" The Gr

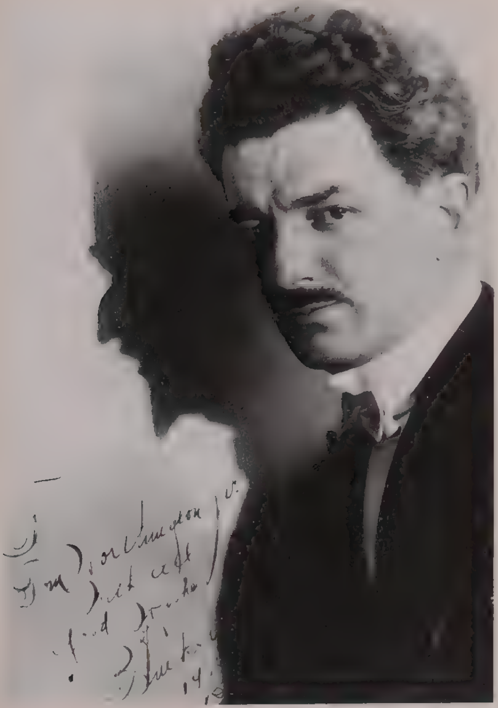
After many years touring the world, Italian-born Raffael Chefalo adapted his show to the confines of the circus (pp. 362–363). While touring in Russia, he added midgets and a giant to his troupe of assistants. In England, Henry Cameron, known professionally as Carmo, toured under canvas as the Great Carmo Circus and Menagerie, with a show that featured lions, bears, camels, elephants, and a cast of 40. While showing in Birmingham, England, in 1929, a powerful storm buried the tent under tons of snow. In an attempt to save people trapped underneath, the tent was cut to pieces. A replacement tent was obtained, and just two weeks later, this tent and everything in it was destroyed by fire. The already perilous life of the traveling magician was made even more precarious by the vagaries of Mother Nature and human error.

The ring was not the only place in the circus where magicians found employment. There is a long tradition of magic acts appearing in the sideshow tent, which entailed performing more than a dozen shows per day for audiences standing just a few feet from the platform. The schedule was grueling and the crowds could be rough, but many future stars of magic, such as Al Flosso and Harry Willard, cut their teeth on the circus sideshow.

Magic Under Canvas

Some magicians desired more freedom than the circus or sideshow could provide, and ventured out in tent shows of their own. Beginning in 1900, James Willard (known as Willard the Wizard) toured throughout the southern United States with his own big top (p. 366). Later, he acted as booking agent for his two sons, Harry and Tommy, each of whom performed in the small towns of Texas and Louisiana with their own enormous shows. The caravan of brightly painted trucks rolling through town followed by the massive tent being erected in a vacant lot was usually all the advertising that was necessary. From the 1920s through the Depression and into the 1940s, rural Americans could attend Willard the Wizard's two-hour show for 25 cents. Two nights later they could return and see a completely different two-hour show, and, a couple evenings later, yet another show composed of all different magic. After six nights, the Willards would pack up their portable city, move on down the road, and start all over again. It was not uncommon for Willard's audiences to arrive in bare feet, and if they didn't have a quarter, they could gain admission by donating food. During each performance Harry Willard would announce, "If anybody out there is a bootlegger, the men in the orchestra would probably swap some tickets for

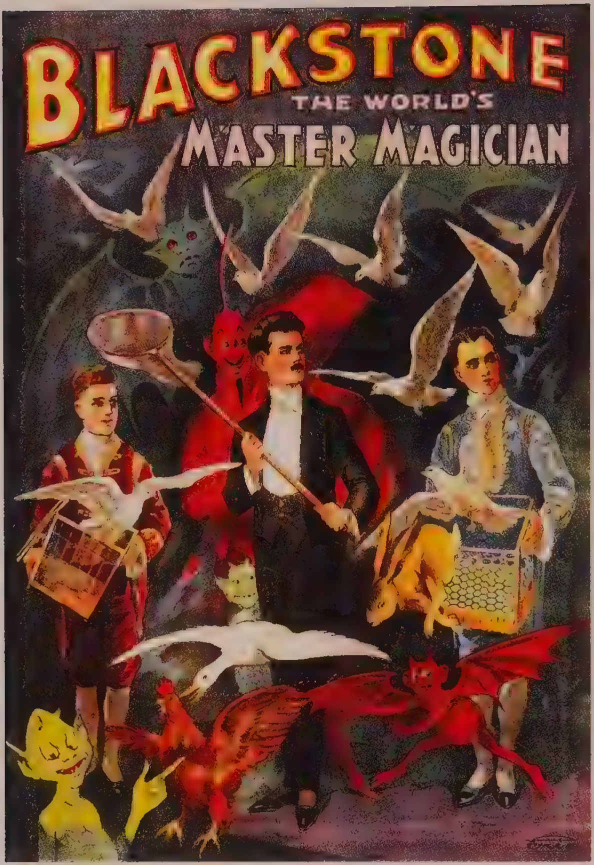




ABOVE: **ca. 1920** Harry Blackstone, second from left, and his eccentric cast of characters pose in the afternoon sun for this panoramic photograph. This scene in front of the Orpheum Theater in Lima, Ohio, stopped traffic and no doubt sold a few extra tickets to the show.

LEFT: **ca. 1920** For decades magicians had incorporated devils into their advertising posters, but by the 1920s audiences were becoming more sophisticated. Harry Blackstone used this creative portrait and shadow to suggest that his magic was aided by unseen powers.

PAGES 342–343: **ca. 1910** During Raymond's tour of England, which he promoted with these grandiose Egyptian-themed posters, he performed primarily for the Stoll theater chain. The great theatrical impresario Sir Oswald Stoll employed nearly every great magician of this generation. He complimented Raymond by calling him 10 percent magician and 90 percent personality.



PAGES 346–347: **ca. 1920** So astonishing was this illusion—Who Wears the Whiskers?—that for decades it was the closing number in the shows of both Blackstone Sr. and Blackstone Jr. The old man in the whiskers appeared in an empty cabinet; upon removing his whiskers, the old man was revealed to be Blackstone himself.

LEFT: **ca. 1920** Unlike his globe-trotting contemporaries, Harry Blackstone spent his entire career touring throughout North America. His long career on the stage, combined with a series of popular comic books and even a radio show, made the name Blackstone synonymous with *magic*.

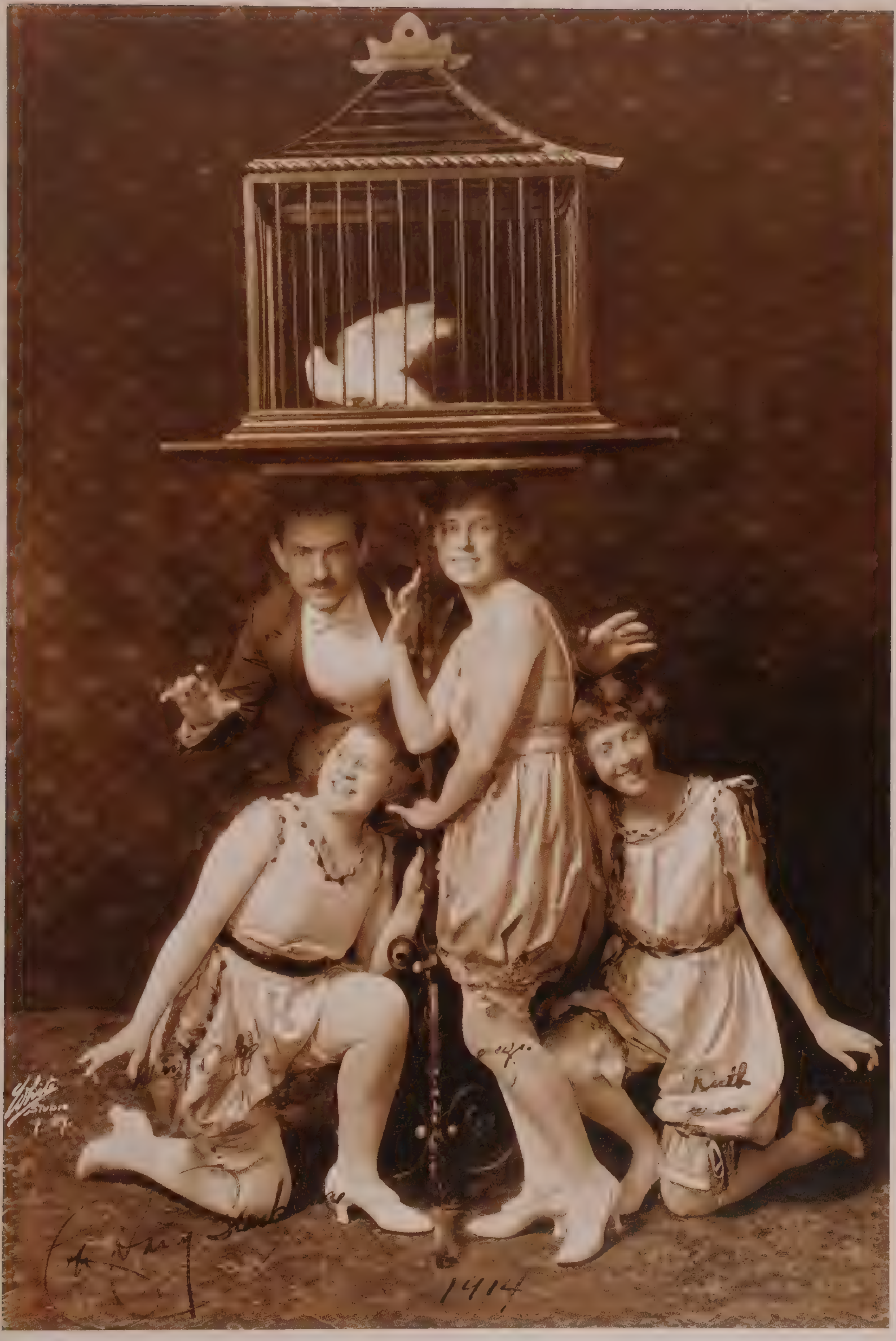
OPPOSITE: **1914** Harry Blackstone knew what appealed to an audience: pretty girls. Some men feel threatened by a magician, as if the display of his arcane knowledge is also a display of the spectators' ignorance. Blackstone felt that if he could lure men into the theater with pretty girls, he could change their opinions about magic.

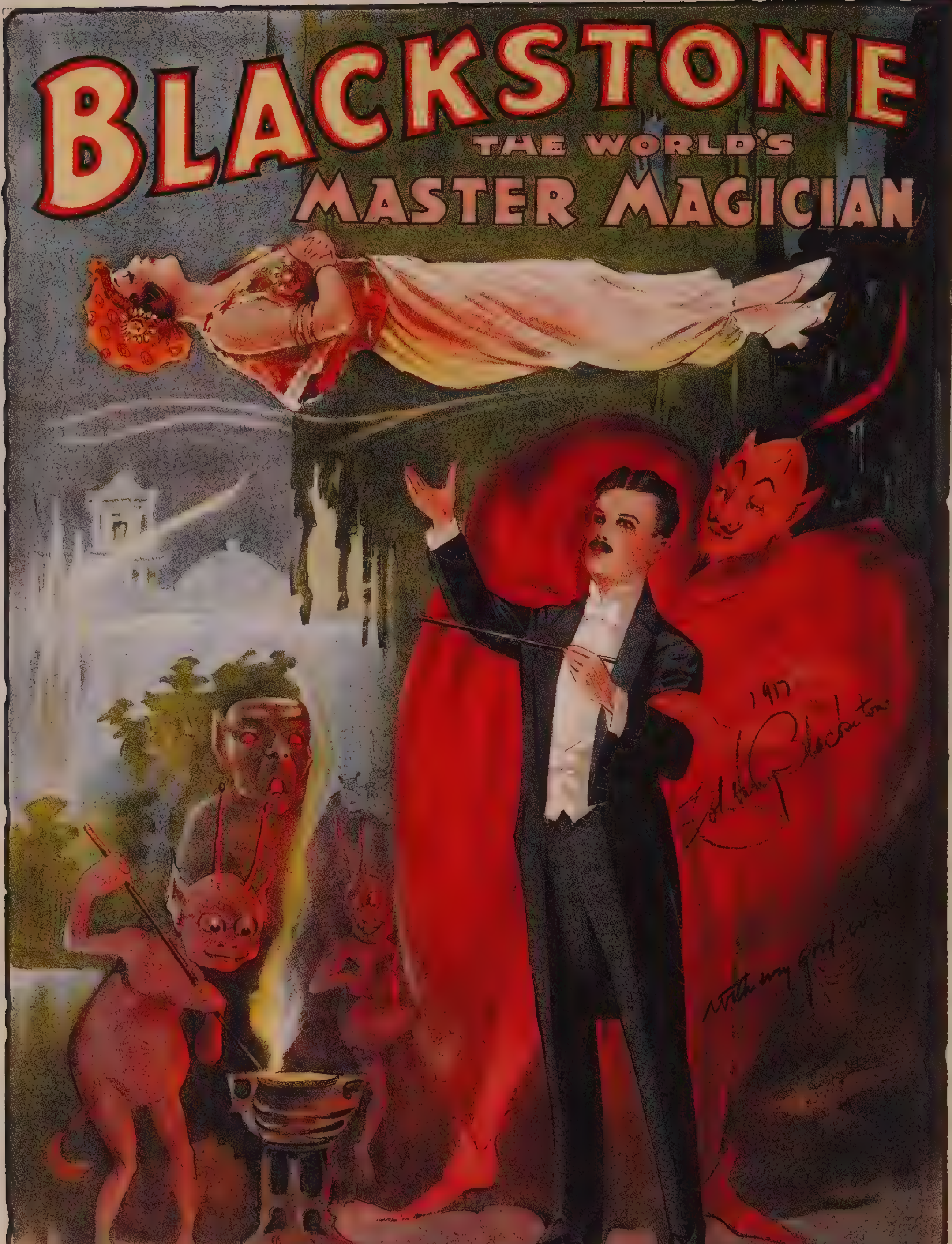
some good corn liquor and find a use for it if it's good. And if anybody brings chickens, pluck them first. We're hip-deep in feathers already."

A number of other magicians found work under canvas within the confines of a uniquely American institution known as Chautauqua. Beginning at Lake Chautauqua, New York, these traveling tent shows operated with enormous success over the summers of the first three decades of the 20th century. Before the advent of air conditioning, vaudeville theaters closed during the hot summer months, which created a huge void to be filled by other forms of entertainment. The sidewalls of a Chautauqua tent could be rolled up, to help cool the spectators. Audiences in small towns and rural areas along the East Coast and throughout the Midwest could enjoy different types of entertainment each night, including performances by such magicians as Edward Maro, Edwin Brush, Walter Floyd, Eugene Laurant, and Ed Reno.

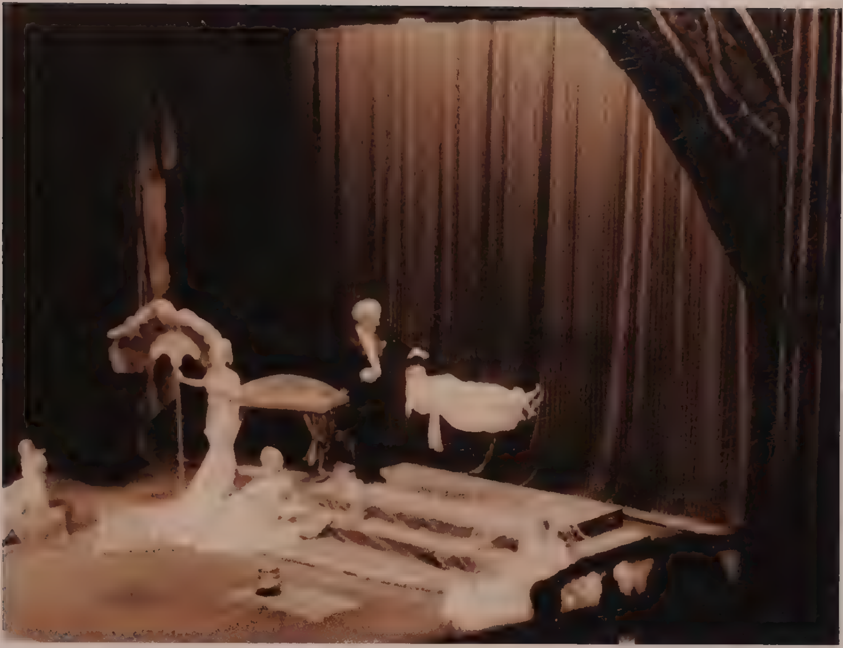
Further off the beaten path, we find another extinct breed of magician known as the "tall grass" showman. These hearty souls shunned the spectacular and embraced the smaller, classic effects that relied on the performer's personality to make them shine. During a six-decade career, Francis Augustus Rapp, born in 1871, never ventured far from his birthplace of Jeffersonville, Indiana. First by horse and buggy and later by automobile, he traveled from town to town, spending a week in each one, presenting a different show every night for six days. During the warm summer months Rapp appeared under canvas, while in the winter he sought out opera houses and, later, schoolhouses. Using tricks made from cigar boxes and tin, he thoroughly entertained audiences whose only previous exposure to magic occurred the last time "Professor Rapp" had passed their way (p. 372). Perhaps the only conjurer to exceed Rapp's record for longevity was an American named John C. Green, who spent most of his 70-year career in the wilds of Canada. The entry from his diary on New Year's Day 1947 effectively sums up Green's life: "Leask, Saskatchewan, at Legion Hall, gross $34.60. 28 degrees below zero. No good here. People all froze up."

Following the retirement or demise of any great magician, it is interesting to see how their theatrical illusions are passed on to the next generation and continue to baffle audiences. In Germany, Alois Kassner built a massive show that rivaled those of any of his contemporaries when he acquired equipment from the recently retired Chevalier Ernest Thorn. During the 1920s and '30s, 16 railroad cars transported Kassner throughout Central Europe, with tons


White Studio N.Y.
Keith
1914



BLACKSTONE
THE WORLD'S
MASTER MAGICIAN
1917
Blackstone
With my good wishes
ERIE
LITHO & PTG CO
ERIE, PA.



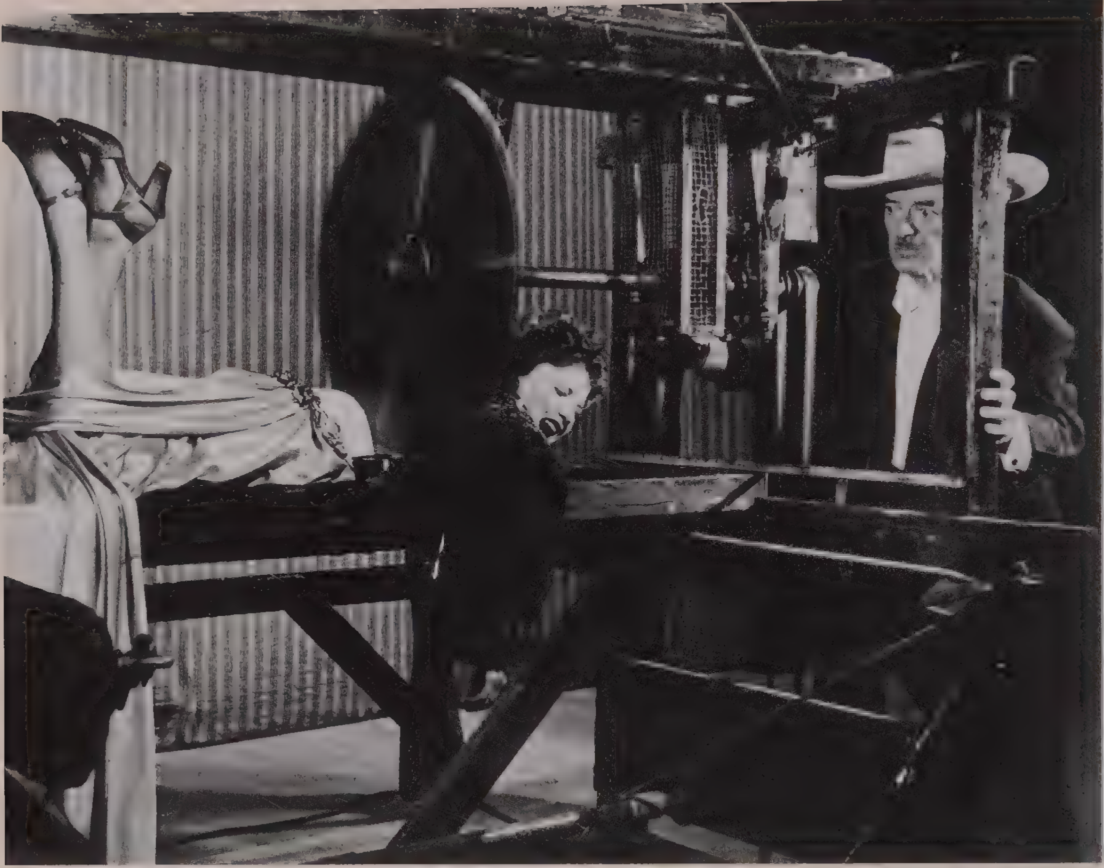
OPPOSITE: **ca. 1934** Blackstone purchased this levitation illusion from Harry Kellar's family after the great magician passed away. Kellar was so enamored of the levitation effect that even in retirement he constructed a new version that incorporated a number of improvements.

ABOVE: **ca. 1940** Because of the specific lighting required by many illusions, it is rare that we see a photo of an actual performance. Shown here is exactly what the audience saw as Blackstone presented Harry Kellar's masterpiece, the Levitation of Princess Karnac.

BELOW: **1947** Hollywood made a huge impact on how show business was presented to the public. Magicians were quick to copy the glamorous look popularized by the top movie stars. In this dramatic image, Blackstone seemingly has one of his assistants in a hypnotic trance.

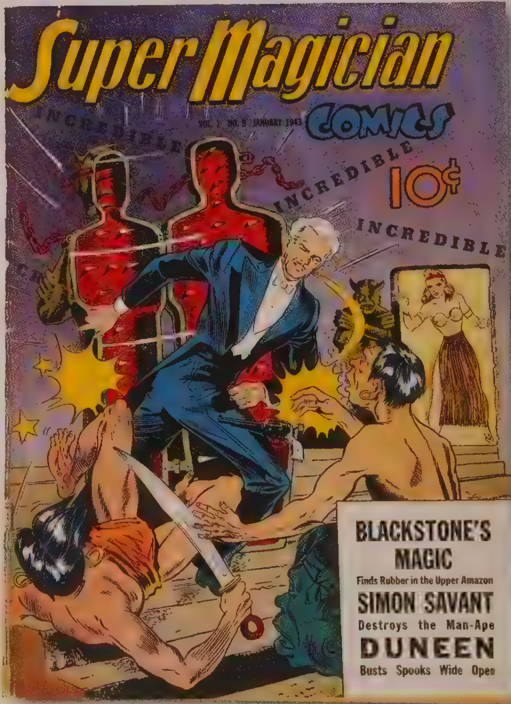
of illusions, a full company of assistants, and a menagerie that included Toto the Vanishing Elephant (p. 383). Helmut Schreiber started out as a film producer, but during Hitler's reign in Germany he became a successful illusionist under the name Kalanag. As the favorite magician of the Third Reich, he was given great freedom to build his show into a massive production. Following Kalanag's death in 1963, his theatrical effects were sold to up-and-coming magicians. Many of these illusions are still in existence.

In 1937, Australian-born Les Levante got help building his show *How's Tricks?* (p. 386) by purchasing a number of illusions from an American vaudeville headliner named the Great Leon (Leon Levy), who'd been forced into retirement by two heart attacks. Across the Atlantic, Cecil Lyle caught the tail end of magic's golden age in England. When his show *Cavalcade of Mystery* opened in 1941, it featured illusions made famous by his predecessors, including Horace Goldin's Sawing a Lady in Half and Walking through a Sheet of Glass; Arnold de Biere's Enchanted Clock Dial, wherein a revolving arrow mysteriously stopped on a clock face at a time merely thought of by a spectator; and R. W. Amac's Find the Lady, a stage-size version of the Three-Card Monte swindle, using giant cards and a real woman.

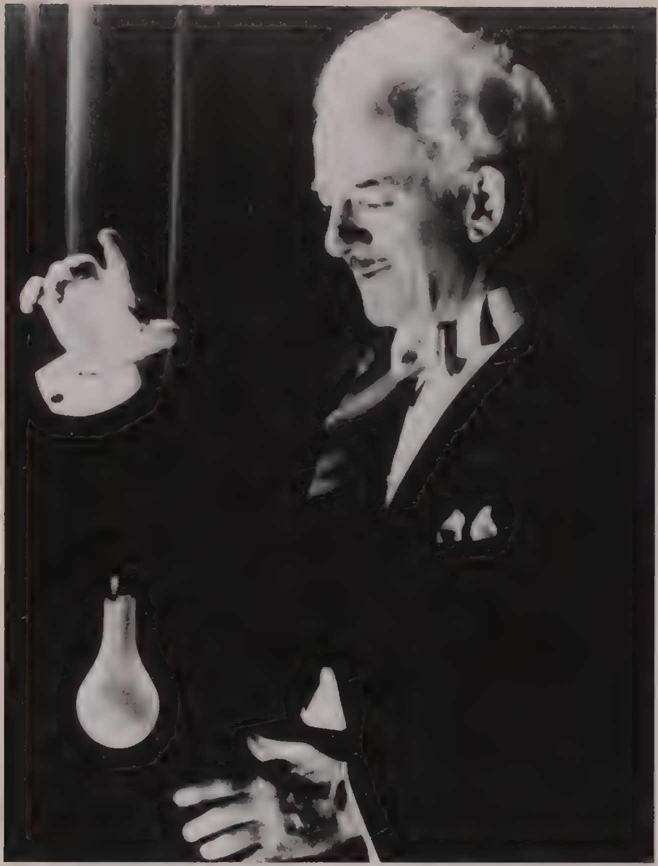


ABOVE: **ca. 1950** Even though this illusion was invented by Horace Goldin, it was a feature of Harry Blackstone's show for more than 20 years. In the original version of Sawing a Lady in Half, the lady endured the ordeal while lying inside a wooden box. In this far more graphic version, the audience actually saw the spinning blade tear through the lady's torso while she lay apparently hypnotized.

RIGHT: **1943** Walter Gibson, creator of the comic-book character the Shadow, wrote Blackstone's *Super Magician* comics for several years in the 1940s. Unlike Batman and Superman, Blackstone was a real person who used his magical powers to fight crime. The popularity of the Blackstone comic books led to a radio show.


Super Magician
VOL. 1 NO. 9 JANUARY 1943
COMICS
10¢
INCREDIBLE
INCREDIBLE
INCREDIBLE
BLACKSTONE'S MAGIC
Finds Rubber in the Upper Amazon
SIMON SAVANT
Destroys the Man-Ape
DUNEEN
Busts Spooks Wide Open

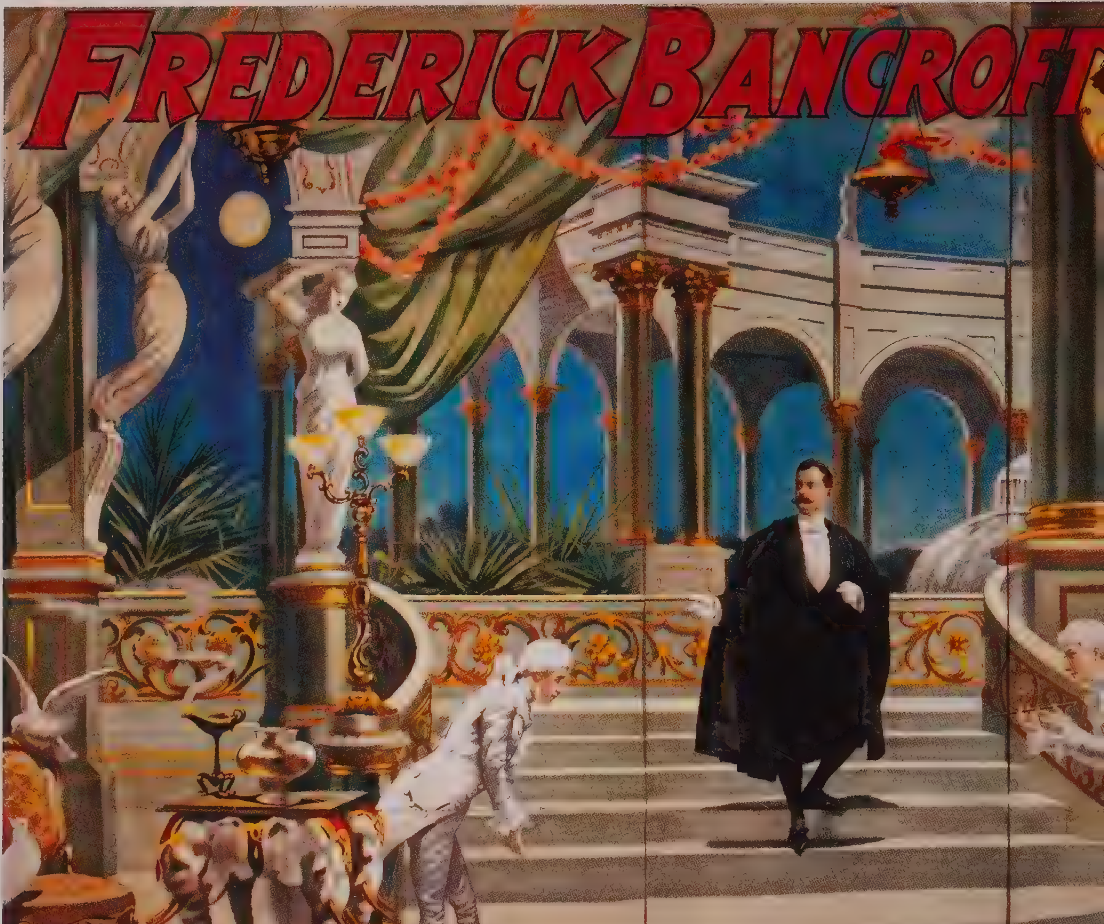
RIGHT: **1946** If there is one magic effect associated with the name Blackstone it is the Floating Light Bulb. A glowing bulb basks in its own light as it flies over the audience and stops within inches of spectators' reach. Slowly the bulb returns to the stage, passing through a solid hoop and coming to rest in Blackstone's hand. This unforgettable sight was featured by both Blackstone Sr. and Blackstone Jr.

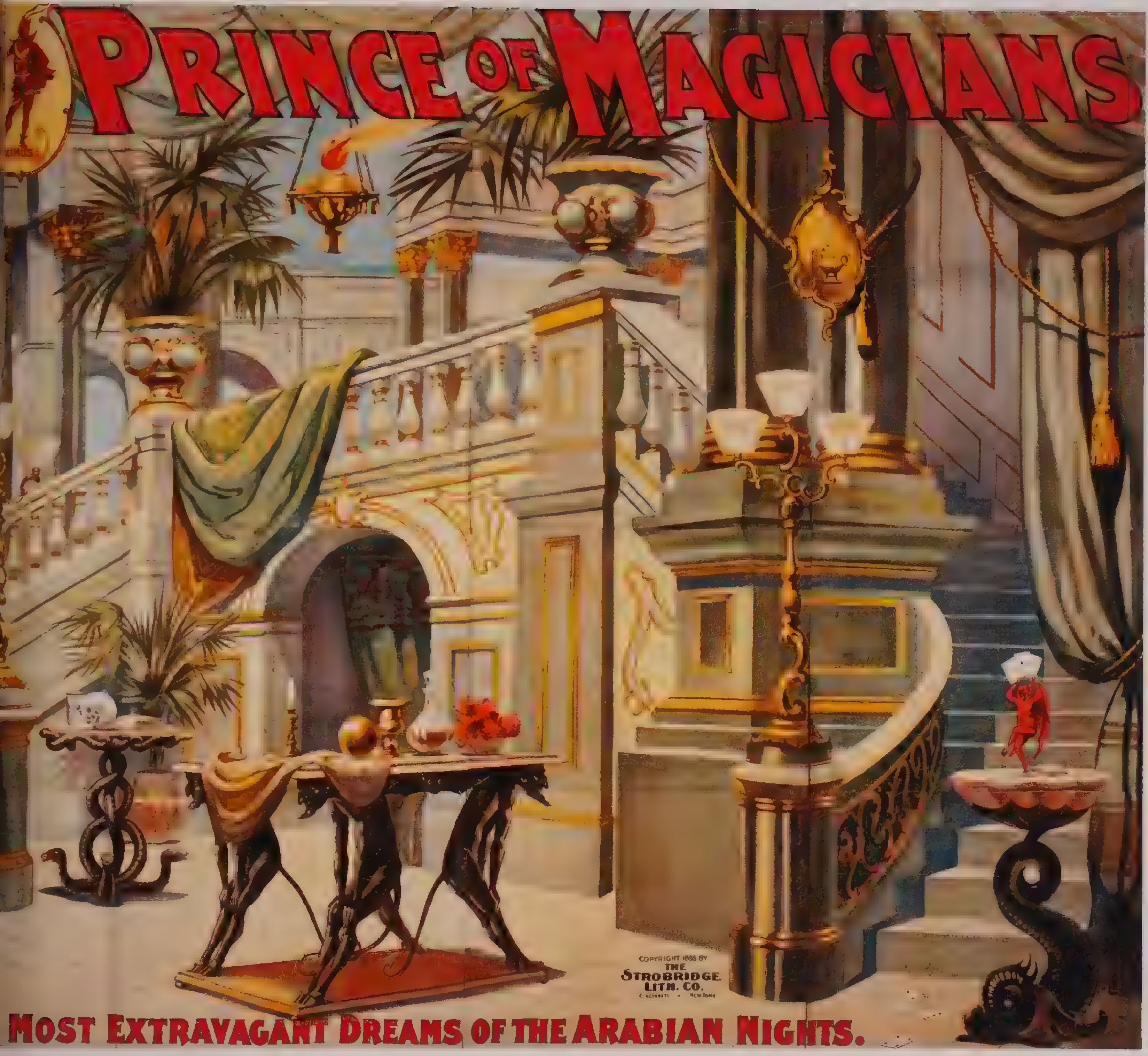


Big, Brassy, Colorful & Adventurous

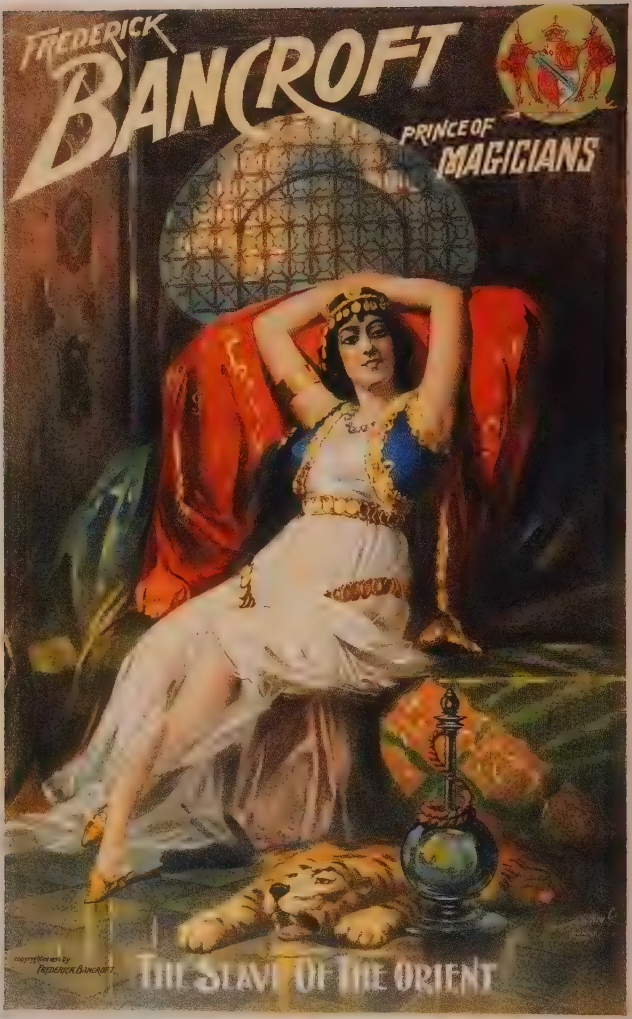
Magic's golden age, from the 1880s to the 1940s, did not disappear suddenly in a puff of smoke, but rather disintegrated slowly under the stifling weight of labor unions, insurance regulations, travel expenses, and a hundred other external forces. The huge illusions that once dazzled audiences became white elephants, and entire shows became dinosaurs. For the first time in 60 years, bigger was no longer better. People had not tired of magic, but there were no more palaces in which the great touring shows could play. As they'd had to do so many times in the past, magicians were forced to sharpen their wands and reinvent themselves. But during this relatively brief window of time in magic's long history, the art itself was at its biggest and brassiest, its most colorful and adventurous. This golden age helped the world struggle through two world wars by gently reminding its people that, regardless of their nationality, everyone is equal when confronted by a bit of magic.

LEFT: **ca. 1940** A magician's persona is dependent, in part, on the audience's being able to see his facial expressions. Something as simple as a raised eyebrow at the proper moment could produce a huge laugh. Before each performance the magician used theatrical makeup to enhance his features.


FREDERICK BANCROFT
THE MAGICIAN'S PALACE - A REALIZATIO

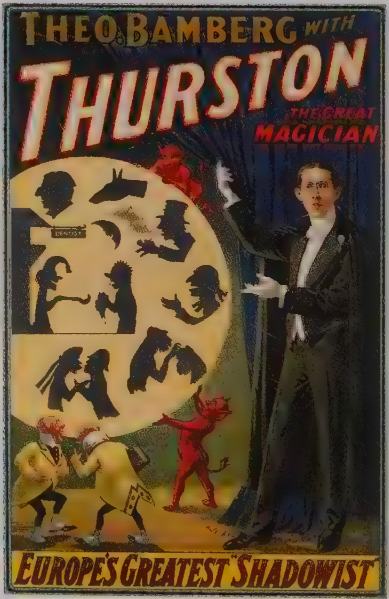

PRINCE OF MAGICIANS
COPYRIGHT 1895 BY
THE
STROBRIDGE
LITH. CO.
MOST EXTRAVAGANT DREAMS OF THE ARABIAN NIGHTS.

ABOVE: **1895** Measuring a massive 9 feet tall by 25 feet wide and printed by the Strobridge Lithograph Company, the top printing house of the day, this is the largest magic poster still in existence. It represents the pinnacle of late 19th-century printing technology and artistic endeavor.


FREDERICK
BANCROFT
PRINCE OF
MAGICIANS
copyrighted 1895 by
FREDERICK BANCROFT.
THE SLAVE OF THE ORIENT

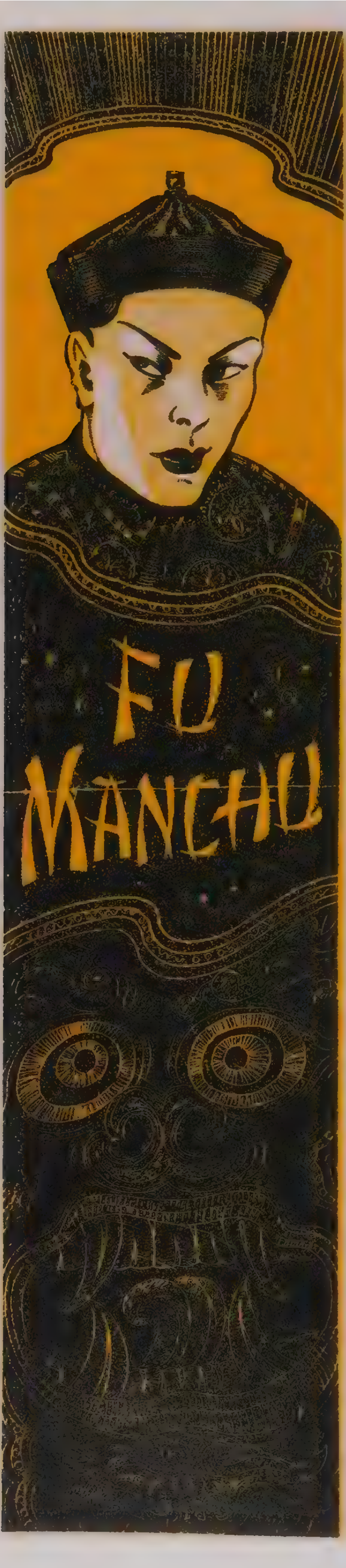
LEFT: 1895 Frederick Bancroft dreamed of following in the footsteps of American legend Herrmann the Great. No matter how much money he lavished on illusions, costumes, curtains, scenery, and posters, he couldn't mask the fact that he was an inexperienced performer. Today the name Bancroft would be completely forgotten were it not for the fact that several of his exquisite posters have survived.

OPPOSITE: 1923 Master magician Theodore Bamberg was known around the world as Okito. Though Dutch by heritage, he performed magic in a Japanese style and created his name by rearranging the letters in the word *Tokio*, which was once the preferred spelling for *Tokyo*.


THEO. BAMBERG WITH
THURSTON
THE GREAT
MAGICIAN
DENTIST
EUROPE'S GREATEST "SHADOWIST"

RIGHT: 1910 Okito sold his act in 1908 and settled down in New York City to operate the Bamberg Magic & Novelty Co. Within two years, however, he was back onstage, this time performing his skillful shadow act in Howard Thurston's show. With just his 10 fingers, a master shadowgraphist can create detailed and realistic moving images of animals and celebrities. Soon, Bamberg returned to the road as Okito and toured for the next 25 years.

To John Braun
from his friend Theo
Febr: 1923.



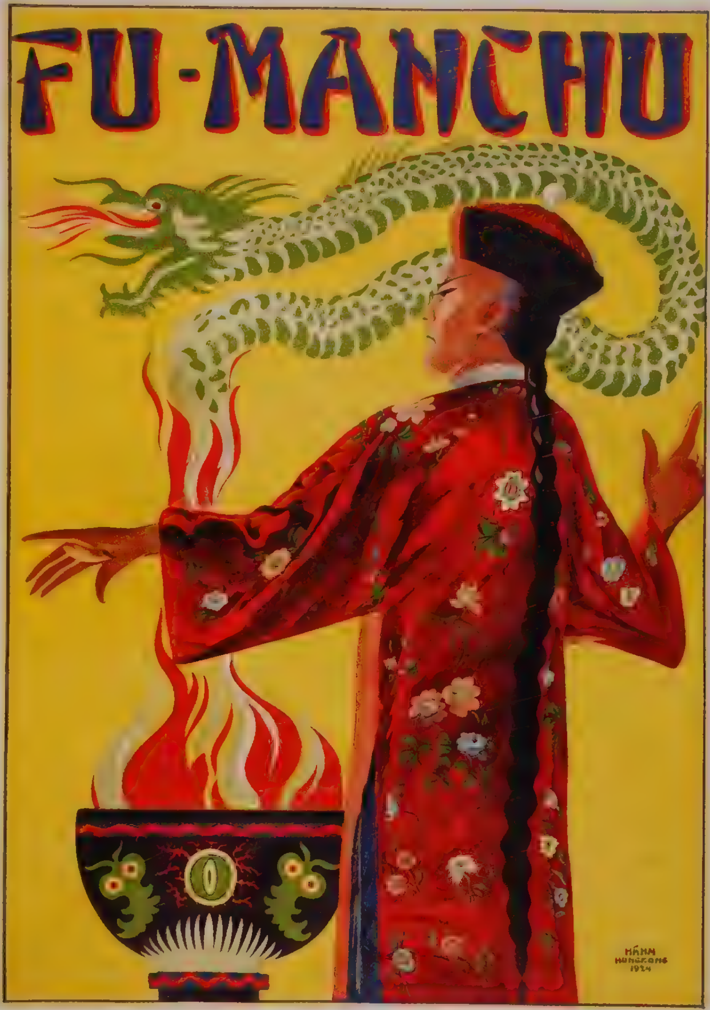
Best wishes
to Jimmy
Magician
of Fu Manchu

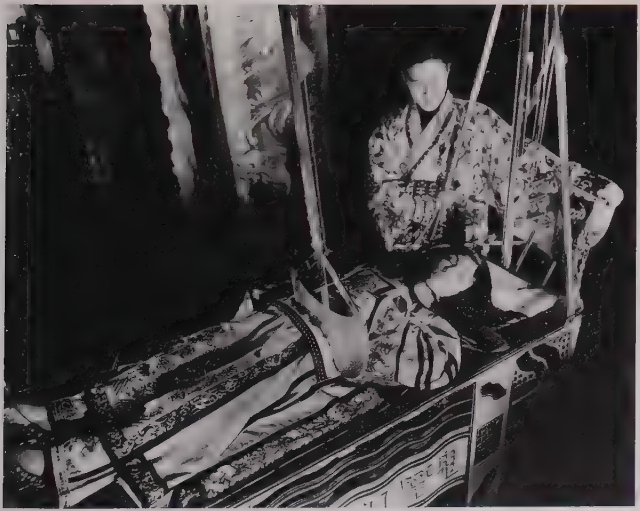
ABOVE: **ca. 1933** The art of shadowgraphy is the ability to create complex shadows with one's hands. One of the masters of this unusual art was David Bamberg's father, Theo Bamberg, a.k.a. Okito, so it is not surprising that young David, seen here, also became an accomplished shadowgraphist.

RIGHT: **1924** This Chinese-style poster was printed while David Bamberg toured in Hong Kong, though the majority of his career was spent performing in Latin America. Bamberg's career peaked during the 1940s. By then, he had a massive show with elaborate scenery, a line of beautiful girls, and male assistants who were skilled comedians, which resulted in a performance filled with uproarious laughter.

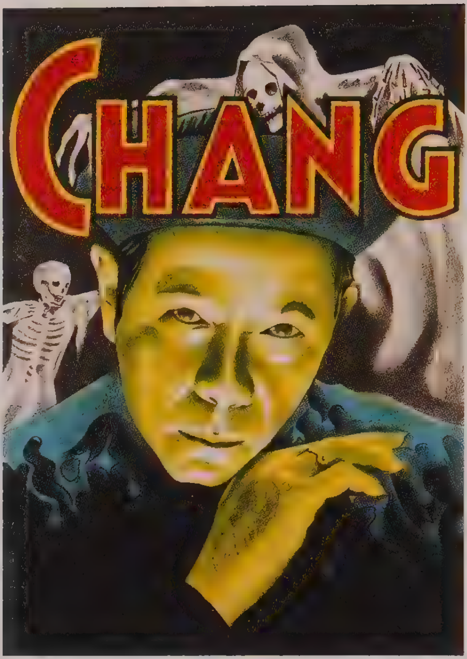
OPPOSITE LEFT: **1943** The magician Fu Manchu was no relation to the fictional character who starred in a series of Sax Rohmer's crime novels. This was the stage persona of David Bamberg, the sixth and final generation of the legendary Bamberg family of magicians. During the early 1940s, he starred in a series of Spanish-language detective films; this image appeared on the stationery of his film company.

OPPOSITE BOTTOM: **ca. 1945** Fu Manchu emerges from a cloth sack, wrists handcuffed together, and smoking a cigarette, which always surprised the audience. The illusion was the Triple Escape Substitution Trunk, a more elaborate version of Houdini's Metamorphosis. Assisting at the left is Fu Manchu's chief illusion mechanic and builder, Edmund Spreer.



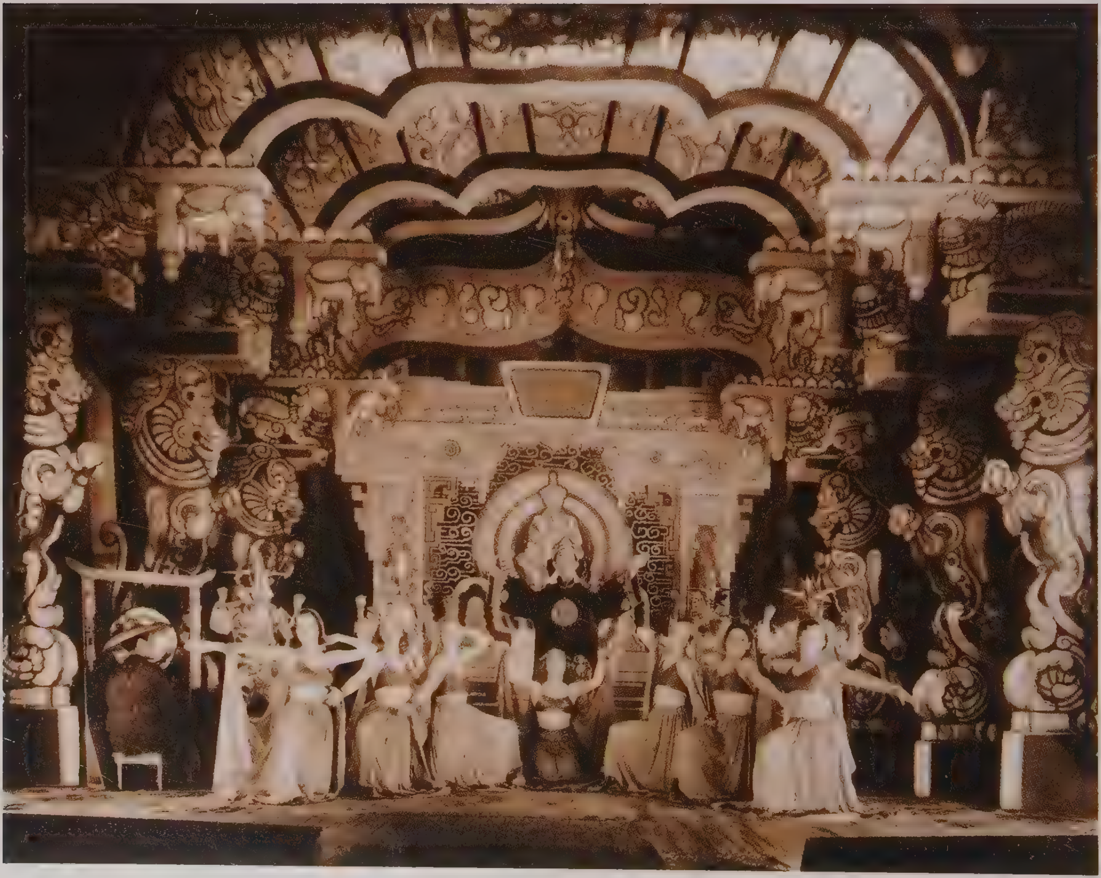


LEFT: **1947** Fu Manchu's illusion the Pit and the Pendulum was an adaptation of Horace Goldin's Sawing a Lady in Half. In Fu Manchu's version, shown here, the traditional spinning saw blade was replaced by a razor-sharp pendulum that slowly lowered as it swung back and forth. This grisly effect was inspired by Edgar Allan Poe's classic story of the same name.



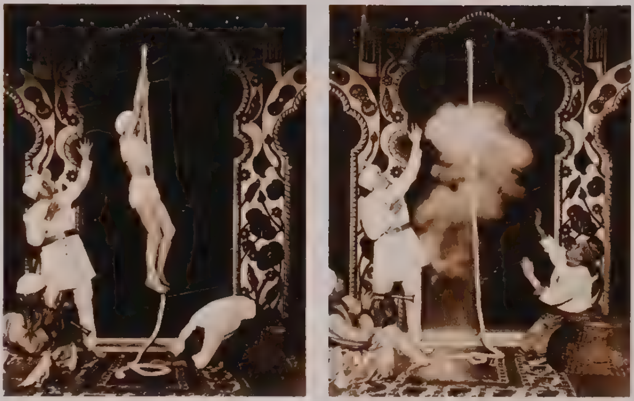
LEFT: **ca. 1944** Though Juan José Pablo Jesorum was born in Panama, he was half Chinese by birth. He began his career working as an assistant for the Great Raymond, but eventually built his own elaborate show and toured the world as Chang. During his long career he appeared in vaudeville, theaters, and with his own magic circus.

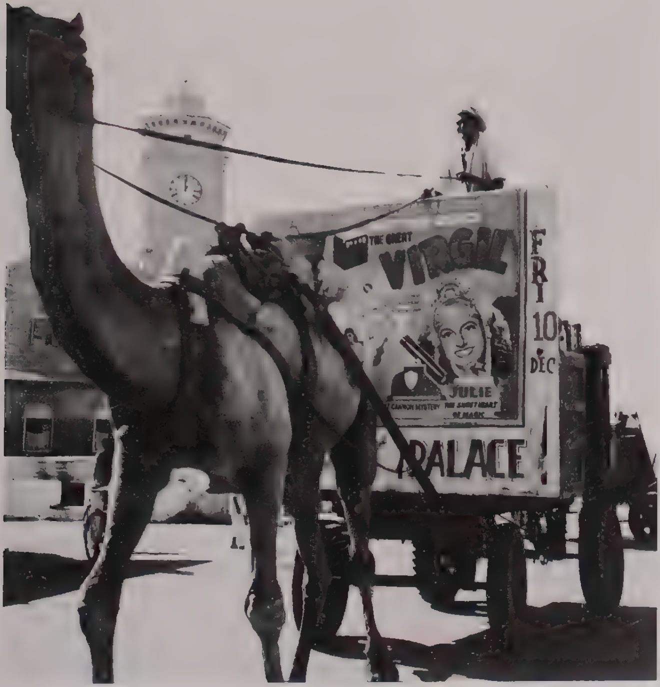
BELOW: **1939** During his engagement in Melbourne, Australia, Chang posed his entire company in front of his magnificent stage set for this photograph. With the proper music and lighting, even the smallest trick can look spectacular when played in front of a gorgeous curtain surrounded by a bevy of beautiful assistants.



LEFT: **1950** Julie, the Great Virgil's wife and costar, posed for this glamorous portrait in the studio of the famous Hollywood photographer Bruno Bernard. Virgil and Julie formed a perfect team both on and off the stage. As times changed, so did their show, going from a lavish touring illusion show to nightclub acts to school performances.

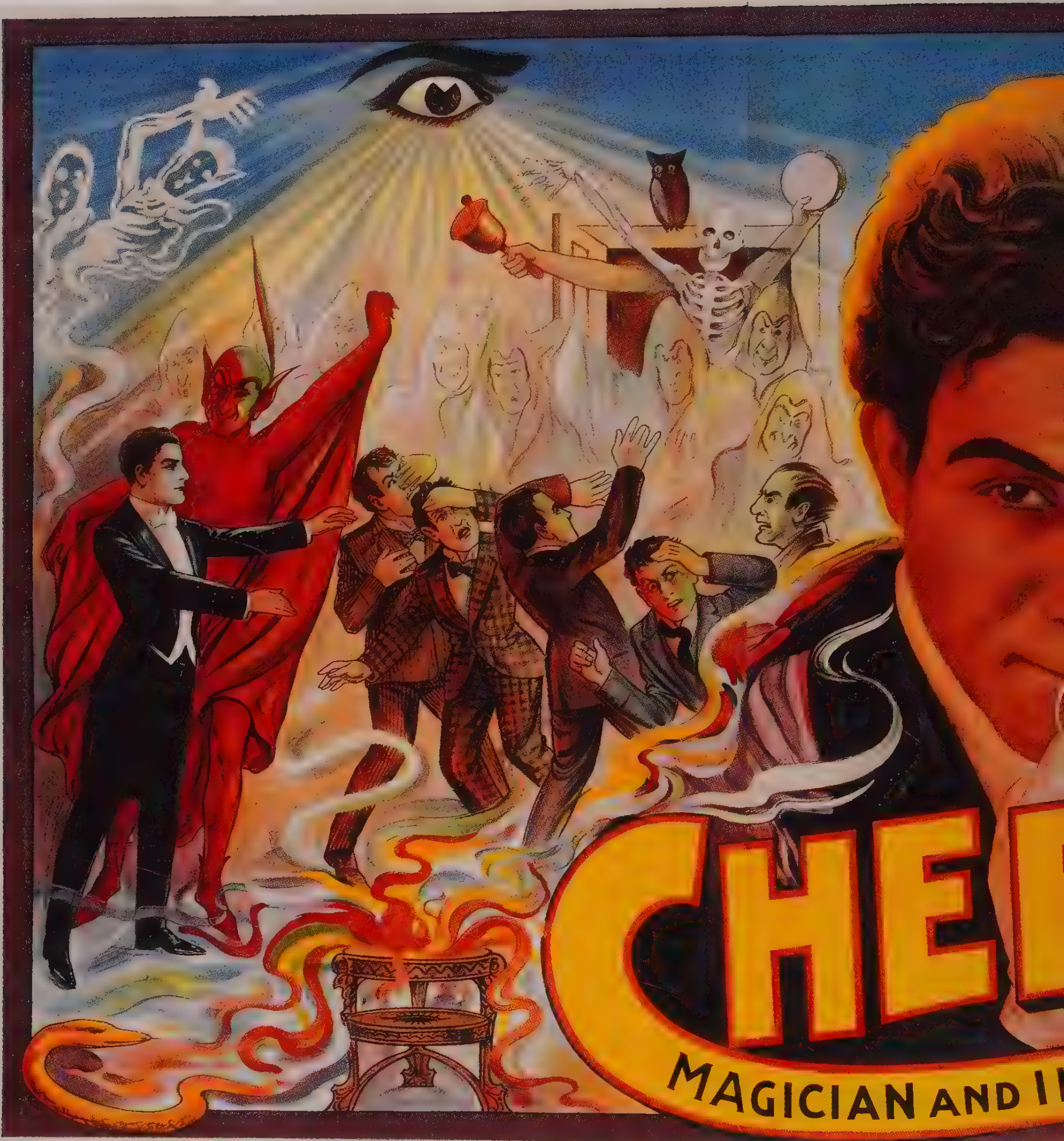
ABOVE LEFT: **ca. 1940** Starting his career in the Pacific Northwest, Virgil Mulkey began, as most magicians do, with a small club act of mostly standard tricks. Eventually his show grew to massive proportions: a company of 25 people with 150 costumes, 20 illusions, and 19 lines of backdrops and hanging set pieces.





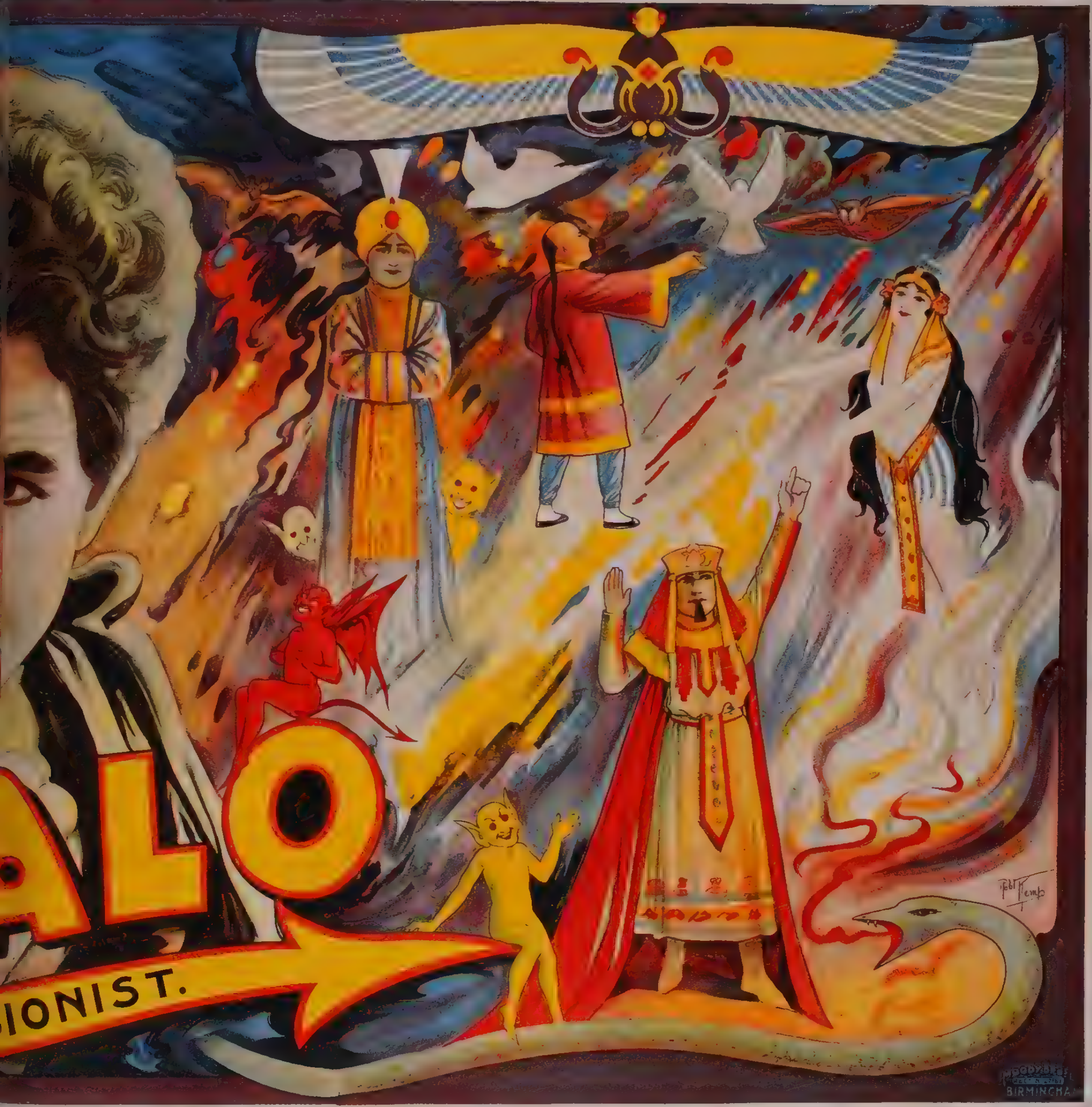
ABOVE: **ca. 1933** Few illusions have been mentioned in the popular press as often as the Indian Rope Trick, which has consequently become a magic-show classic. Here Virgil's assistant (dressed as a Hindu boy) climbs to the top of a mysteriously suspended rope, where he will vanish in a puff of smoke.

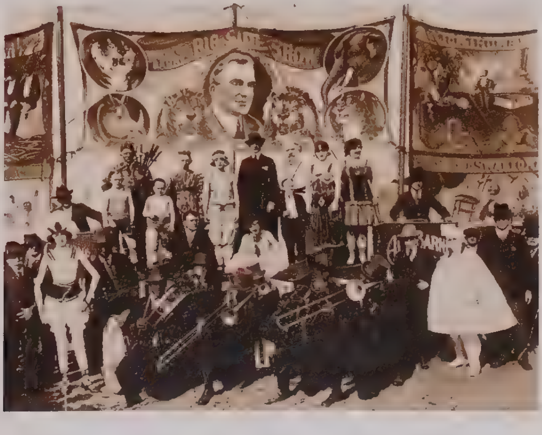
LEFT: **1954** Virgil and Julie's single world tour lasted for an astonishing five years. Here in Karachi, Pakistan, their equipment was moved from the train station to the theater via camel power. The attention generated by this caravan was capitalized upon by pasting one of Virgil's posters to the side of a packing crate.



LEFT: **ca. 1915** With his wife, Magdalena, in the costarring role, Chefalo billed this act as Palermo and Chefalo. In time the show grew into a full evening's entertainment that included 15 midgets and a giant who ably assisted in the many illusions. Toward the end of his long career Chefalo toured with a European circus.

ABOVE: **ca. 1933** Born in Italy, Raffael Chefalo moved to America as a child and began his career in vaudeville. His friend Harry Houdini suggested that he perform entirely in pantomime to make his act suitable for international audiences. This he did, and eventually he appeared on five continents.



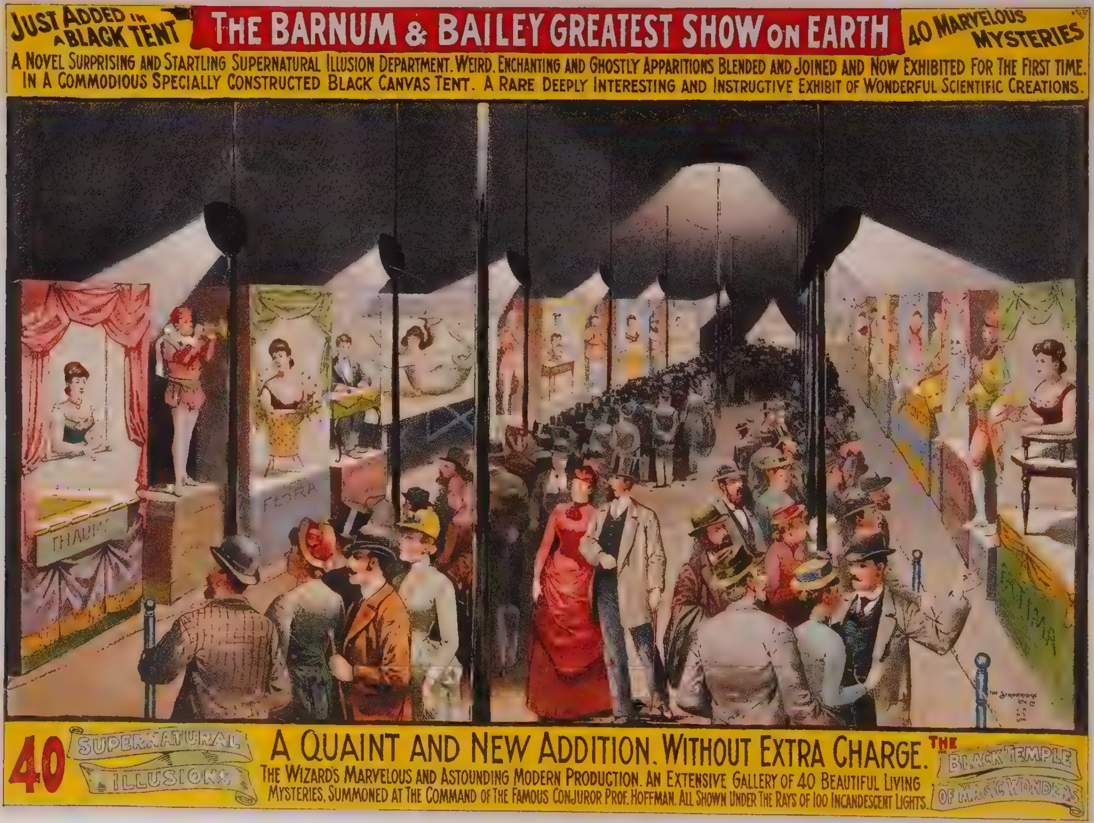


RIGHT: **1921** The Al G. Barnes circus sideshow offered an array of freaks and human wonders, including the magician Al Flosso, shown in the photograph to the left of the Fat Lady. These sideshows were also called Ten-in-One shows because 10 different acts could be viewed for one admission. Canvas banners graphically advertised each act, often hyperbolically.

TOP LEFT: **1930s** On the bally stage in front of the sideshow tent, the "talker" performs the Linking Rings to gather a crowd. As the rings link and unlink, the glistening steel and clanging sounds can be seen and heard up and down the midway.

CENTER LEFT: **ca. 1920s** The sideshow, where acts might perform 20 shows per day, was an ideal place for a budding magician to hone his craft. A few worked their way out of the sideshow to become masters of their profession. Seen on this bally stage at an amusement park is Al Flosso, second from the left in a necktie, a great figure in 20th-century American magic, both as a performer and, later, as the proprietor of the Flosso-Hornmann Magic Company in New York City.

BELOW: **1889** Amid a veritable city of white tents in the Barnum & Bailey circus lot, a single black tent housed the "Black Temple of Magic Wonders," where most of the so-called human mysteries were reflected images. Given the rarity of actual human oddities, circus owners like P. T. Barnum dipped into the magician's bag of tricks to create their own freaks.



JUST ADDED IN A BLACK TENT

THE BARNUM & BAILEY GREATEST SHOW ON EARTH

40 MARVELOUS MYSTERIES

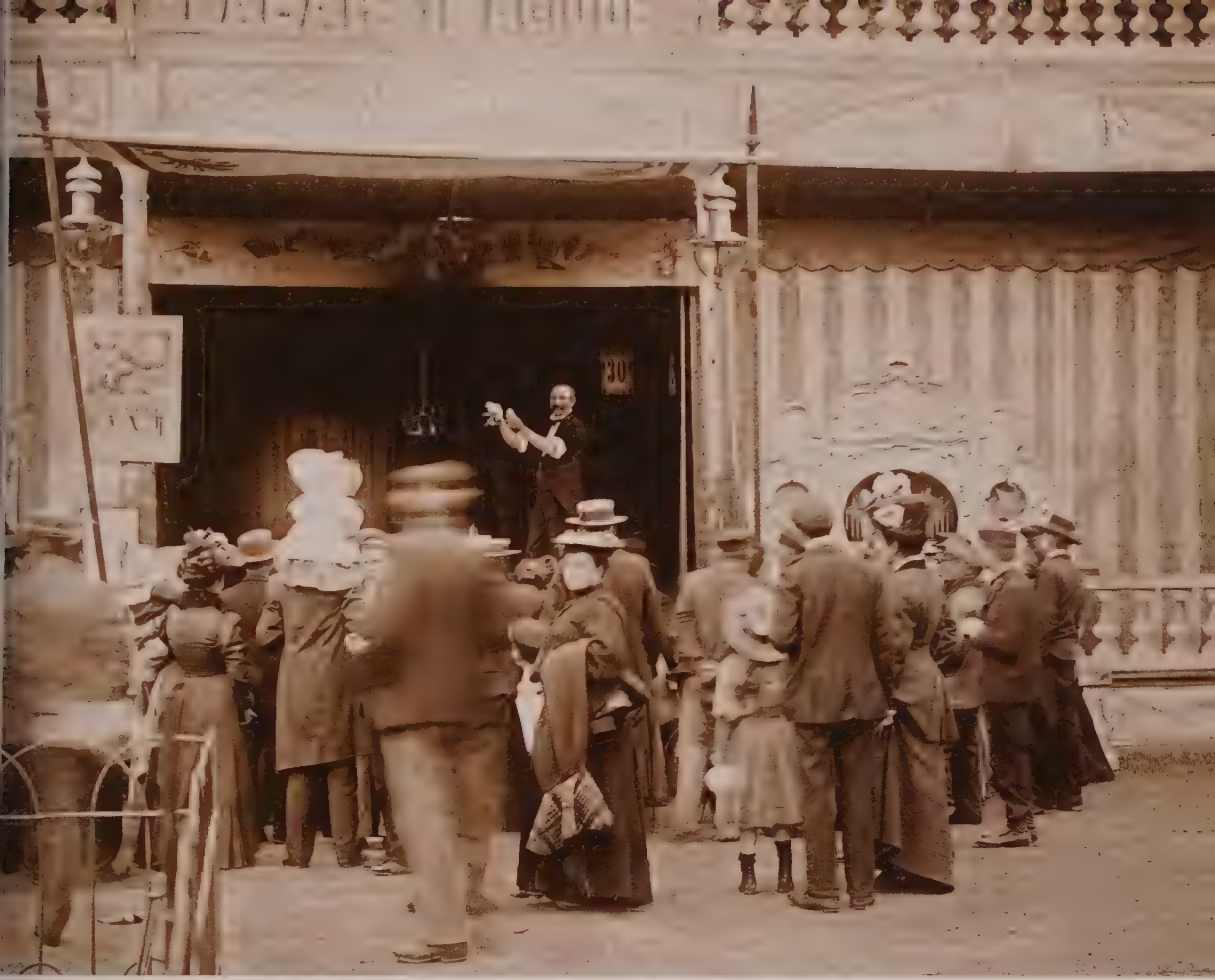
A NOVEL SURPRISING AND STARTLING SUPERNATURAL ILLUSION DEPARTMENT. WEIRD, ENCHANTING AND GHOSTLY APPARITIONS BLENDED AND JOINED AND NOW EXHIBITED FOR THE FIRST TIME. IN A COMMODIOUS SPECIALLY CONSTRUCTED BLACK CANVAS TENT. A RARE DEEPLY INTERESTING AND INSTRUCTIVE EXHIBIT OF WONDERFUL SCIENTIFIC CREATIONS.

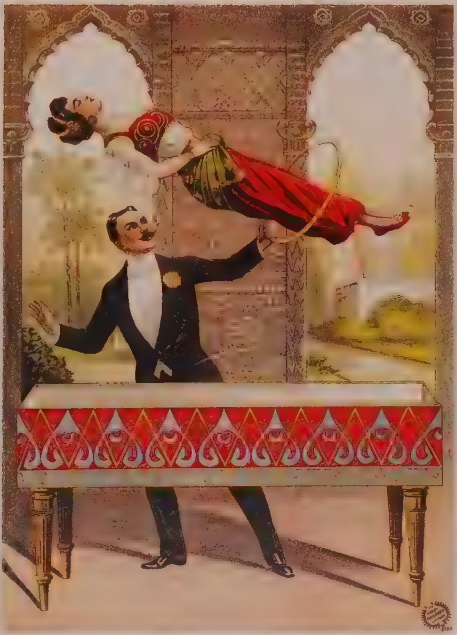
40 SUPERNATURAL ILLUSIONS

A QUAINT AND NEW ADDITION. WITHOUT EXTRA CHARGE.

THE WIZARD'S MARVELOUS AND ASTOUNDING MODERN PRODUCTION. AN EXTENSIVE GALLERY OF 40 BEAUTIFUL LIVING MYSTERIES, SUMMONED AT THE COMMAND OF THE FAMOUS CONJUROR PROF. HOFFMAN. ALL SHOWN UNDER THE RAYS OF 100 INCANDESCENT LIGHTS.

THE BLACK TEMPLE OF MAGIC WONDERS



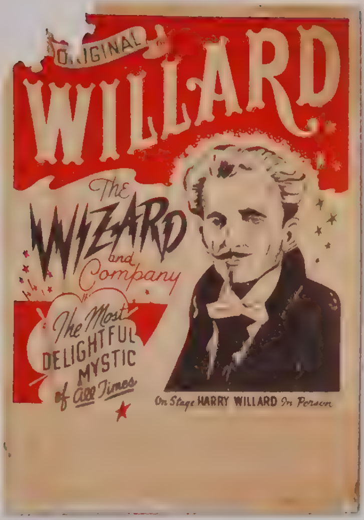


ABOVE: **ca. 1915** French magician Léo D'Alcy is seen here performing magic to entice potential customers into his outdoor Palais Magique (Palace of Magic). The beautiful stock poster (right) can be seen hanging on the left edge of the stage, providing a further inducement to come into the show. At the right is a massive band organ that, with its distinctive music, effectively alerted people anywhere within a quarter-mile radius that something special was about to happen.

RIGHT: **1913** This iconic image of a magician was produced by the famous Adolph Friedländer Lithograph Company in Hamburg, Germany. So popular was the Floating Lady effect that hundreds of magicians around the world could purchase these stock posters in bulk and add their own names to the image.

BELOW: **ca. 1935 and ca. 1925** Willard worked primarily in the southern United States, entertaining rural families. The sights of the company's brightly painted red trucks rolling through town and the big top rising on a vacant lot advertised the arrival of Willard the Wizard. His tent, below, could seat up to 2,000. The company carried its own theater, chairs and bleachers, lights, and stage, so it always performed in familiar surroundings. By deciding which towns to visit, how long to stay, the price of admission, and the length of the show, Willard was the master of his own destiny.

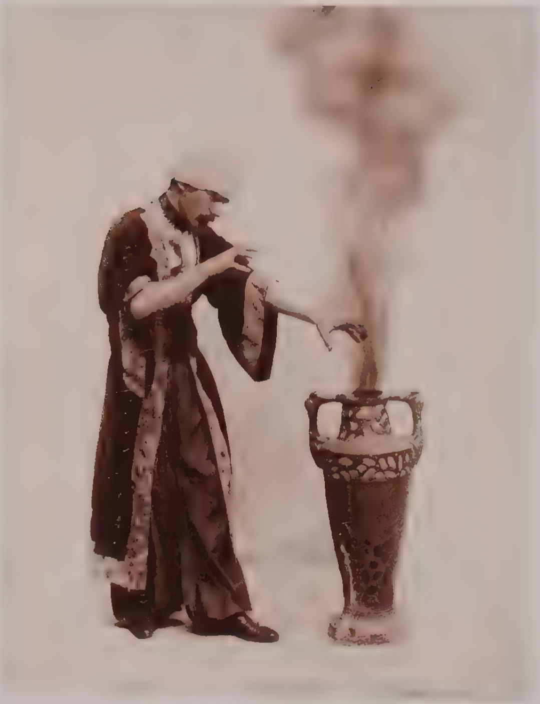
ABOVE: **ca. 1920** Harry Willard came from a magical family, with his father and two brothers all performing at various times as Willard the Wizard. Harry learned the trade from his father, James Willard, and gained his first solo experience on the Mollie Bailey Circus sideshow. In 1946 Willard's house car tragically burned; this photo of him rising phoenix-like from the ashes was one of the few things that survived.

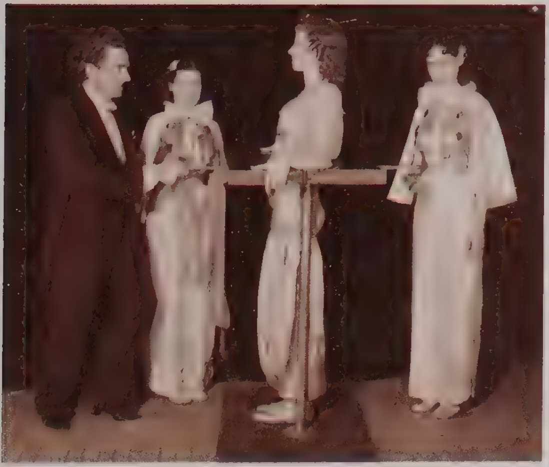

ORIGINAL
WILLARD
The WIZARD and Company
The Most DELIGHTFUL MYSTIC of All Times
On Stage HARRY WILLARD In Person

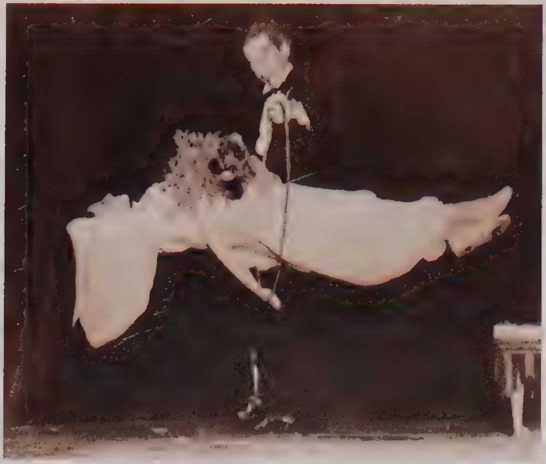
ABOVE: **ca. 1940** By conventional standards, Willard's advertising paled in comparison to many of his contemporaries' posters. But he sure knew his audience. The arrival of Willard the Wizard was an annual event that was greatly anticipated. Parents remembered seeing the show as children and wanted their own children to enjoy that same experience.

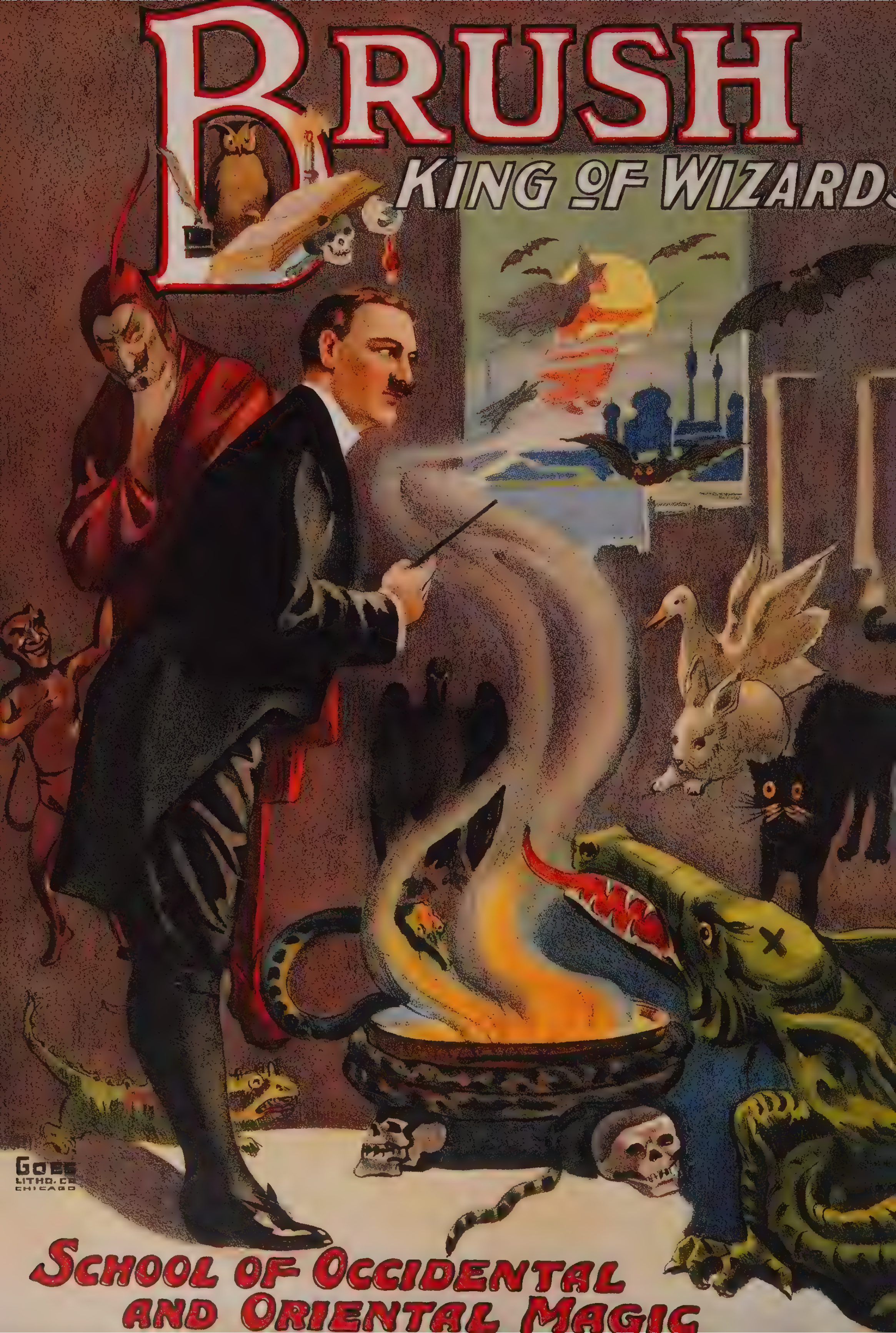
BELOW: **ca. 1938** Below left, Willard deftly pushes a long steel rod through an assistant's midsection. Below right, his wife, Joy, floats effortlessly in the air. During a week's engagement, the entire show changed every third night, making it necessary to carry three completely different 2.5-hour shows.

BELOW: **1922** Throughout the Deep South people of Cajun descent were lured to the show by atmospheric promotional photos such as this one that fueled their belief in black magic. Routines such as the famous Willard Spirit Cabinet, where ghostly apparitions appeared onstage, induced wild reactions from those who believed they were seeing more than a magic show.



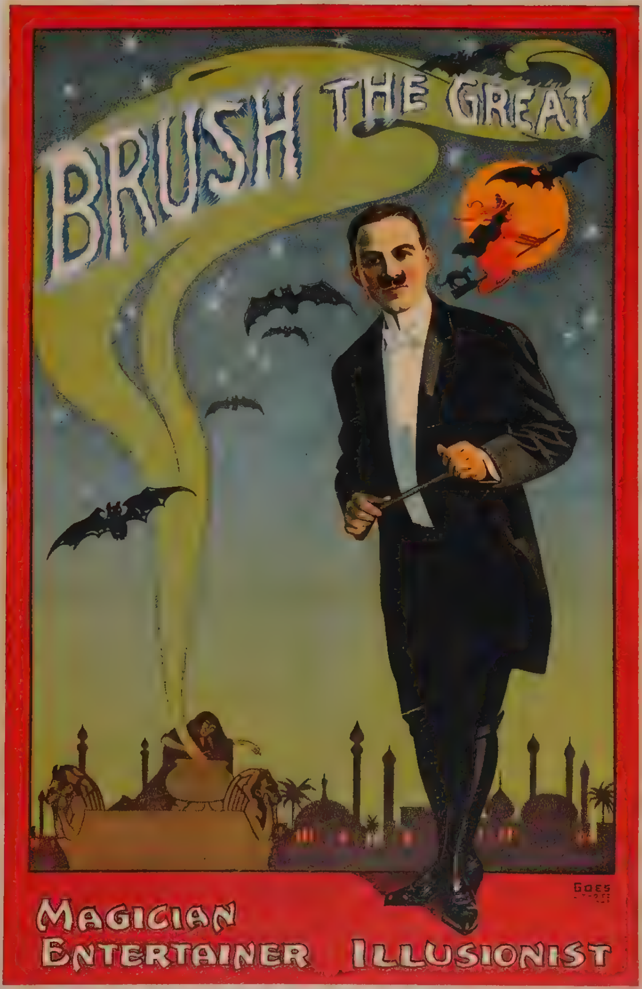





BRUSH
KING OF WIZARDS
GOES LITHO. CO CHICAGO
SCHOOL OF OCCIDENTAL AND ORIENTAL MAGIC

LEFT: **ca. 1930** Edwin Brush's second wife, Ada Mary Porter, became an important asset to her husband's show during their years together on the road. She is shown here wearing the costume from her crystal-gazing act, wherein she answered questions with the help of a crystal ball, visible at left.

ABOVE LEFT: **ca. 1905** Brush's upturned mustache provided a unique appearance throughout his life, accentuated in this early portrait with devilish hair and eyebrows. For 25 years he worked the Chautauqua circuits with an act consisting mainly of small-scale but classic magic effects.

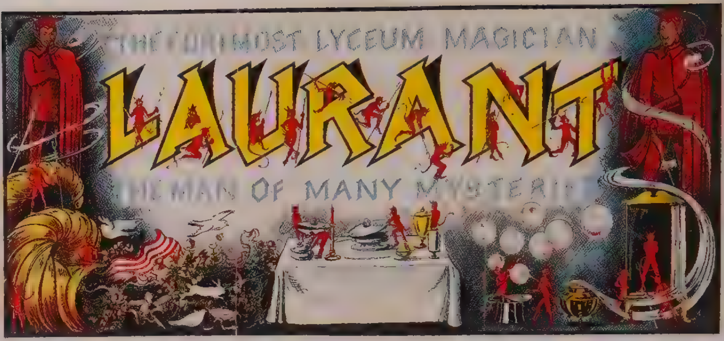


OPPOSITE: **1915** Chautauqua was a uniquely American form of entertainment in which a series of tents hopscotched across the midwestern states offering a different type of show every evening. Edwin Brush was a Chautauqua pioneer, and this poster was described by his friend and fellow magician Eugene Laurant as "the best lithograph of a magician I ever saw."

RIGHT: **1915** When Chautauqua started to fade in the late 1920s, Brush moved to California and performed in schools and churches, and then for the troops during World War II. Retirement was not an option. Even in his 1980s he kept 10 suitcases ready to go, each one packed with an evening's worth of magic.

OPPOSITE: **ca. 1900** Walter Truman Best became the most successful magician in the Lyceum field under the name Edward Maro. By 1905 he was earning an astounding $3,000 per month, but his life was tragically cut short by typhoid fever at just 39 years of age.

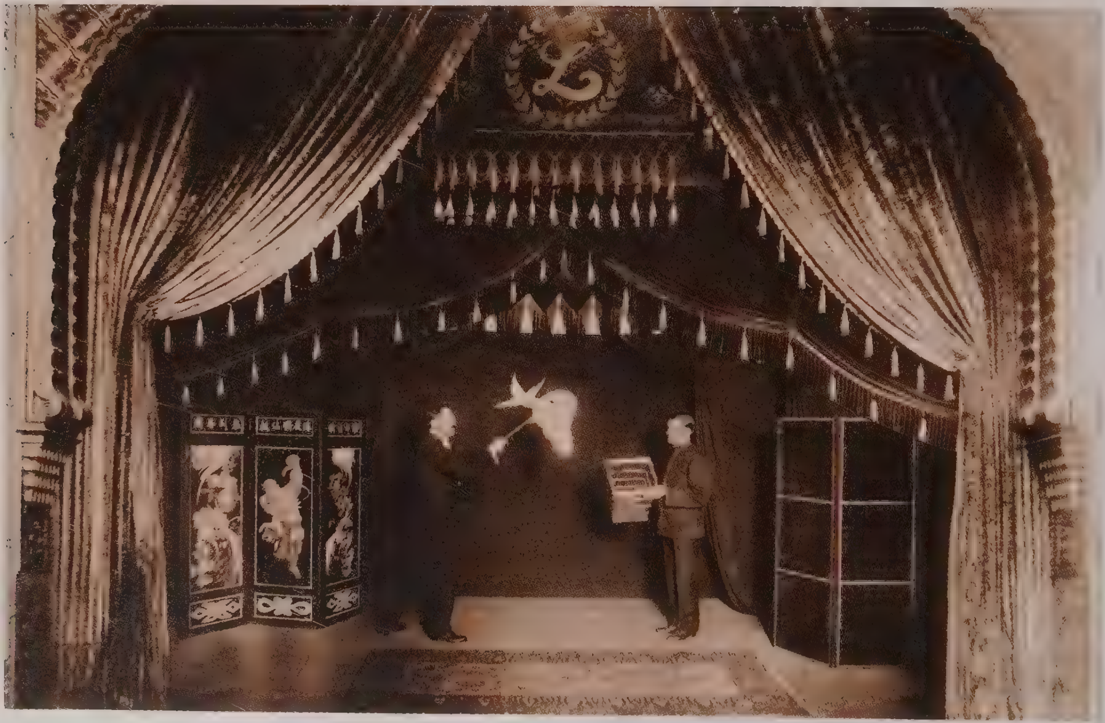
RIGHT: **ca. 1915** Tented shows such as the Chautauqua performances were restricted to the fair-weather months. During the winter many of the Chautauqua performers, such as Eugene Laurant, switched over to a similar form of entertainment called Lyceum that utilized indoor spaces such as town halls and auditoriums.

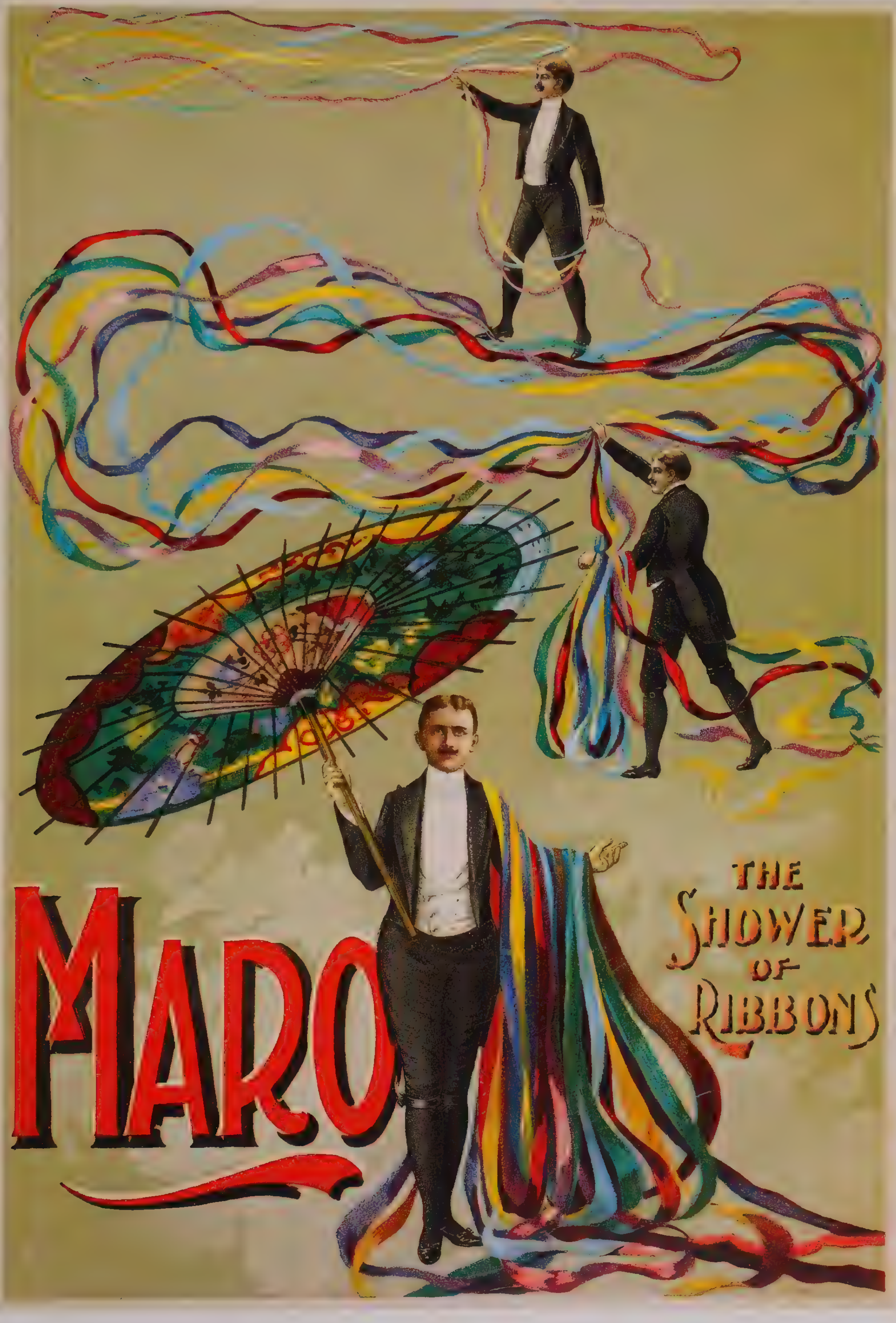


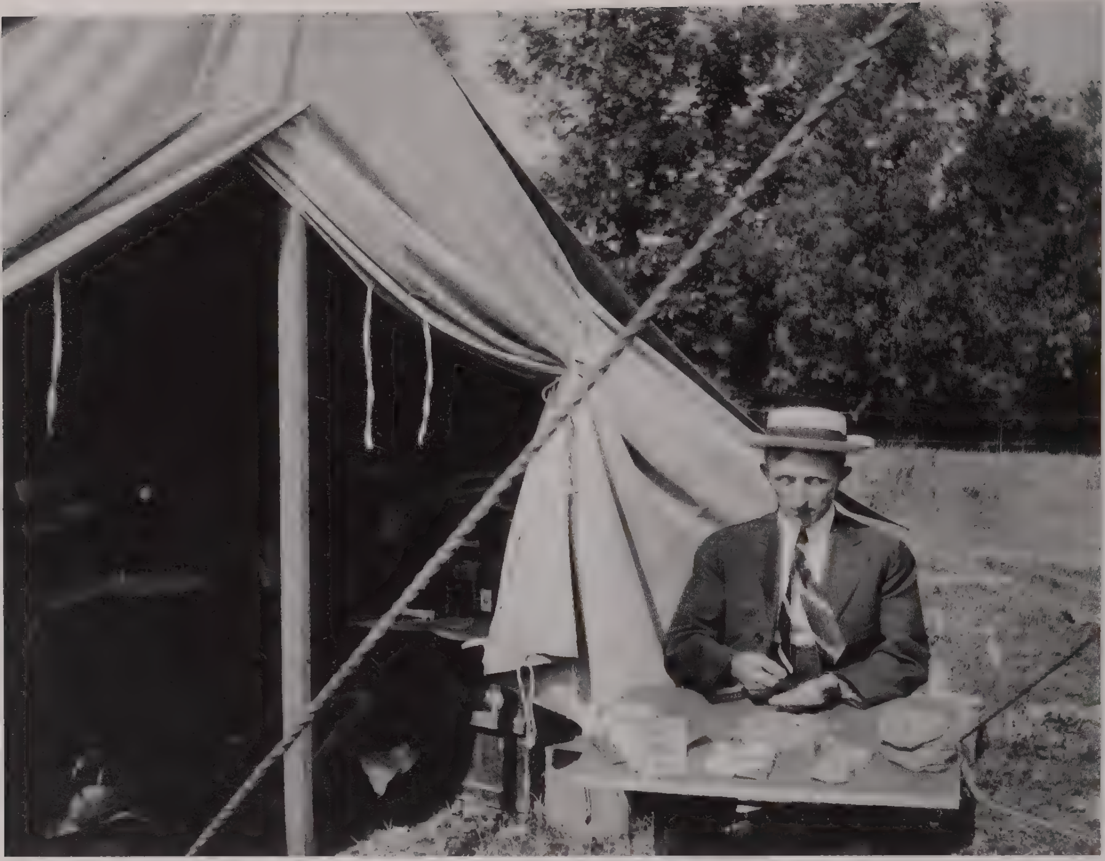
LEFT: **ca. 1913** Redpath was the largest Chautauqua circuit, and it is clear from the size of this tent that Redpath performers entertained huge audiences. Star performers such as Laurant could earn weekly salaries of as much as $300, a king's ransom in the days before income tax.

DPATH CHAUTAUQUAS.
REDP
CHAUTAUQUAS

BELOW: **ca. 1915** Eugene Laurant is catching live pigeons with a net and placing them in a cage. His spectacular Lyceum show included at least four large illusions and custom draperies with a large L above the stage. The *Cincinnati Enquirer* described Laurant's show as "[a] program that has never been equaled before in this city."



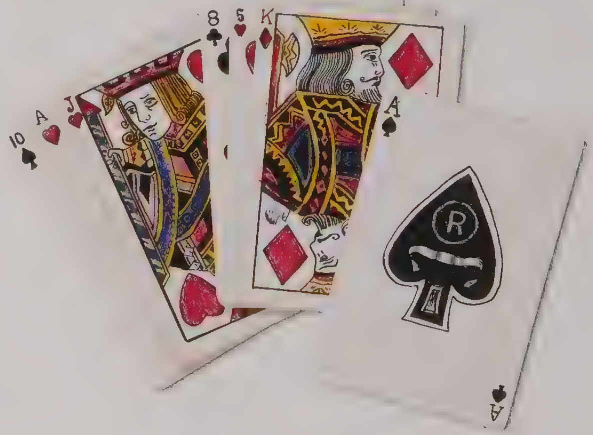

MARO
THE
SHOWER
OF
RIBBONS



ABOVE: **ca. 1910** Gus Rapp was a proud "40-miler"—a small-time performer who rarely traveled more than 40 miles between engagements. He is shown here outside his "front door," tabulating the receipts from the previous evening's performance. In his scrapbook, underneath this photo, he wrote, "Augustus Rapp counting money. A trick very few magicians can do."

RIGHT: **ca. 1900** Although Rapp never achieved nationwide fame during his career, he earned a comfortable living for half a century by entertaining ordinary folks with magic tricks he had built himself. When Rapp needed an oversize deck of cards, he used colored pens to draw every card, including an ace of spades that featured his initial.

OPPOSITE TOP: **1932** McDonald Birch was another magician who established himself mainly in small U.S. towns. He was constantly adding new routines to his show to please his loyal audiences. Here Mabel Sperry Birch emerges unharmed from a cabinet that just moments before was filled with swords.

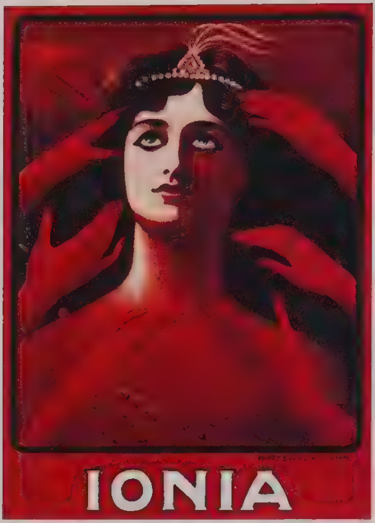


BIRCH
Master MAGICIAN and Company

ABOVE: **ca. 1950** Traveling the back roads of America, Birch couldn't depend on the railroads to transport his show. This custom-made trailer, which included living quarters and storage room for props, meant that the Birches were completely independent. They could travel or sleep when and where they pleased.

RIGHT: **ca. 1940** This highly effective publicity photo of McDonald Birch and his wife, Mabel Sperry, was taken by Chicago's great theatrical photographer Maurice Seymour. The name BIRCH is spelled out on the prop for the Nest of Boxes, a featured trick wherein a spectator's missing watch ultimately reappeared inside the smallest of the five nested boxes.

To my Friend
Thos. C. Worthington
With good luck
Always!
11/18/1941
BIRCH

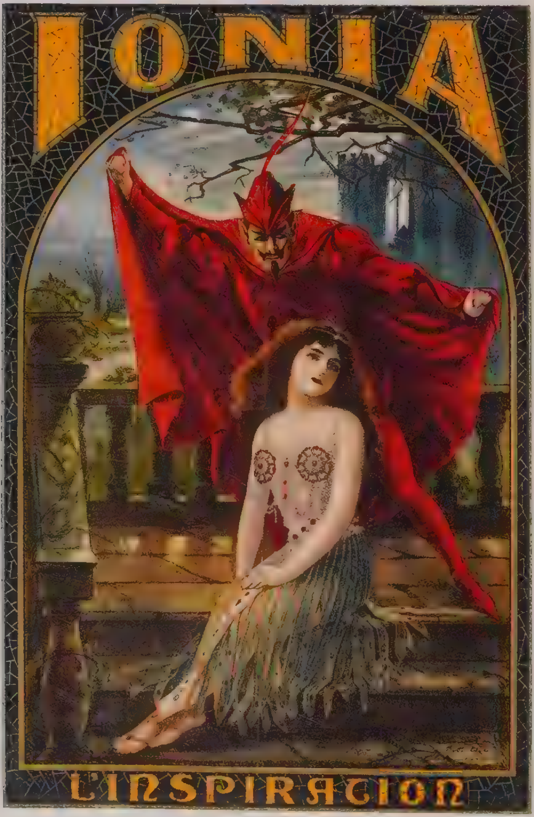


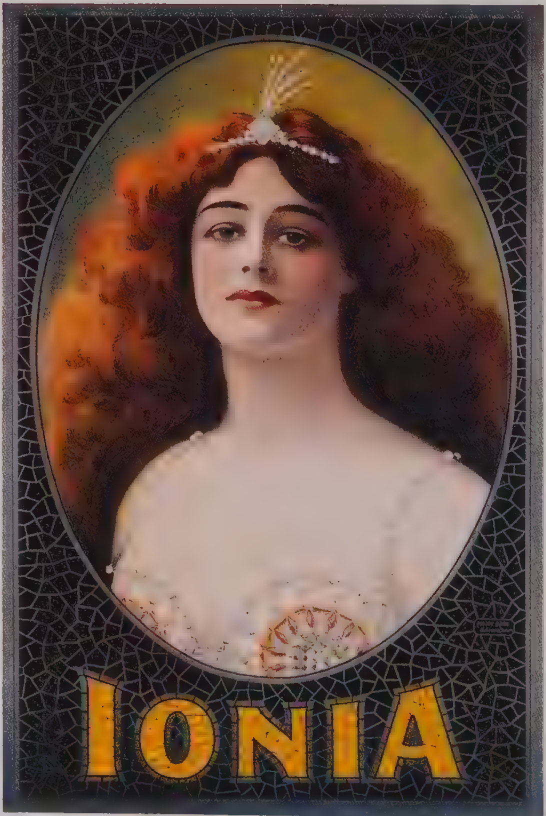
LEFT: **1911** Clementine de Vere, a.k.a. Ionia, was not a born performer, but she was born into a magical family. Her father, Charles de Vere, operated a magic company in Paris, and her mother performed a Japanese-style illusion act under the name Okita. They saw in their beautiful daughter the potential to become one of the very few female illusionists.

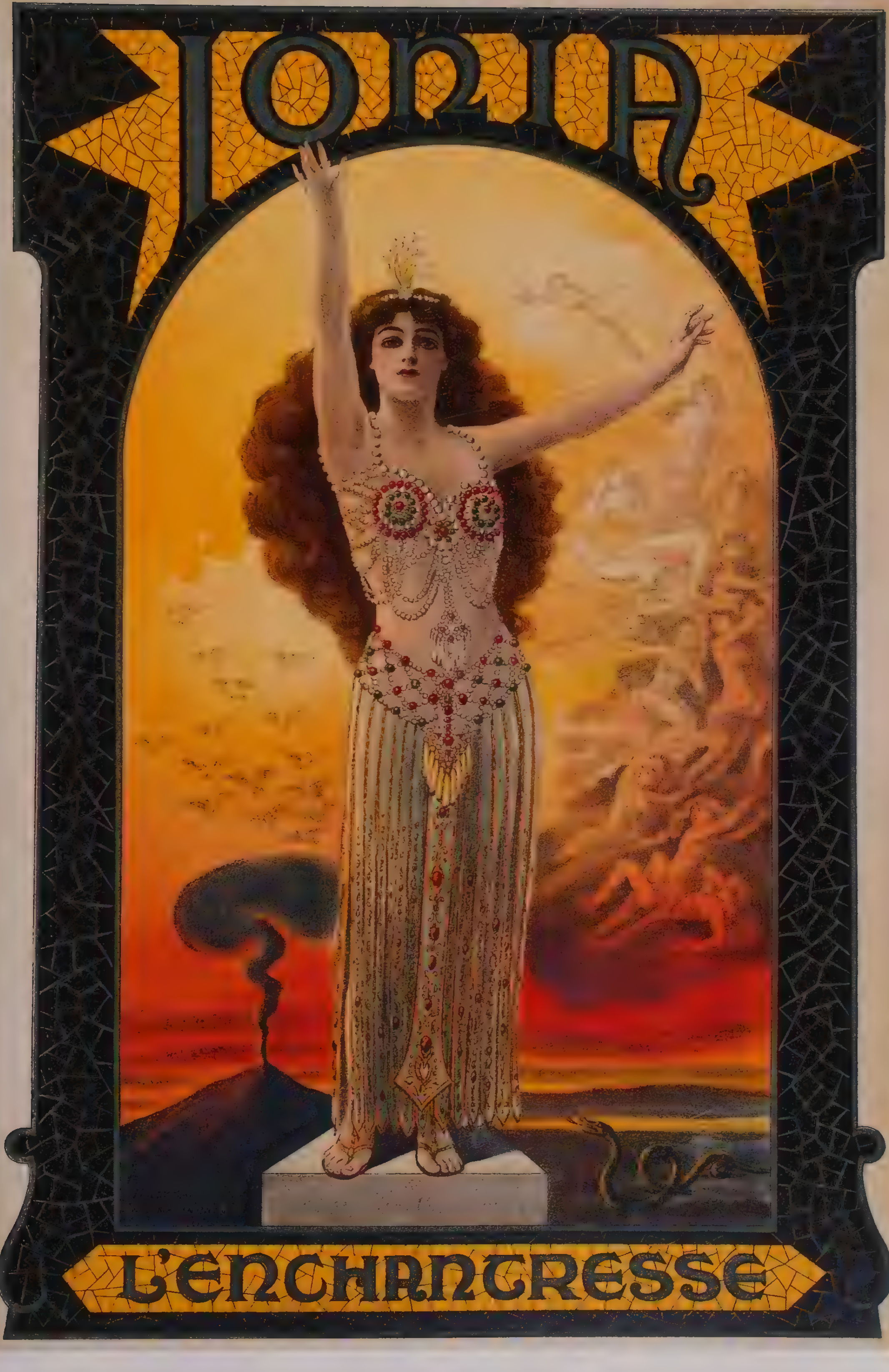
OPPOSITE: **1911** Ionia's big break in America was to be an engagement at the exclusive Folies Bergère in New York City, a nightclub hoping to duplicate the spectacular success of its namesake in Paris. Unfortunately, before Ionia could even cross the Atlantic, the Folies Bergère closed in 1911, after just six months, due to poor attendance.

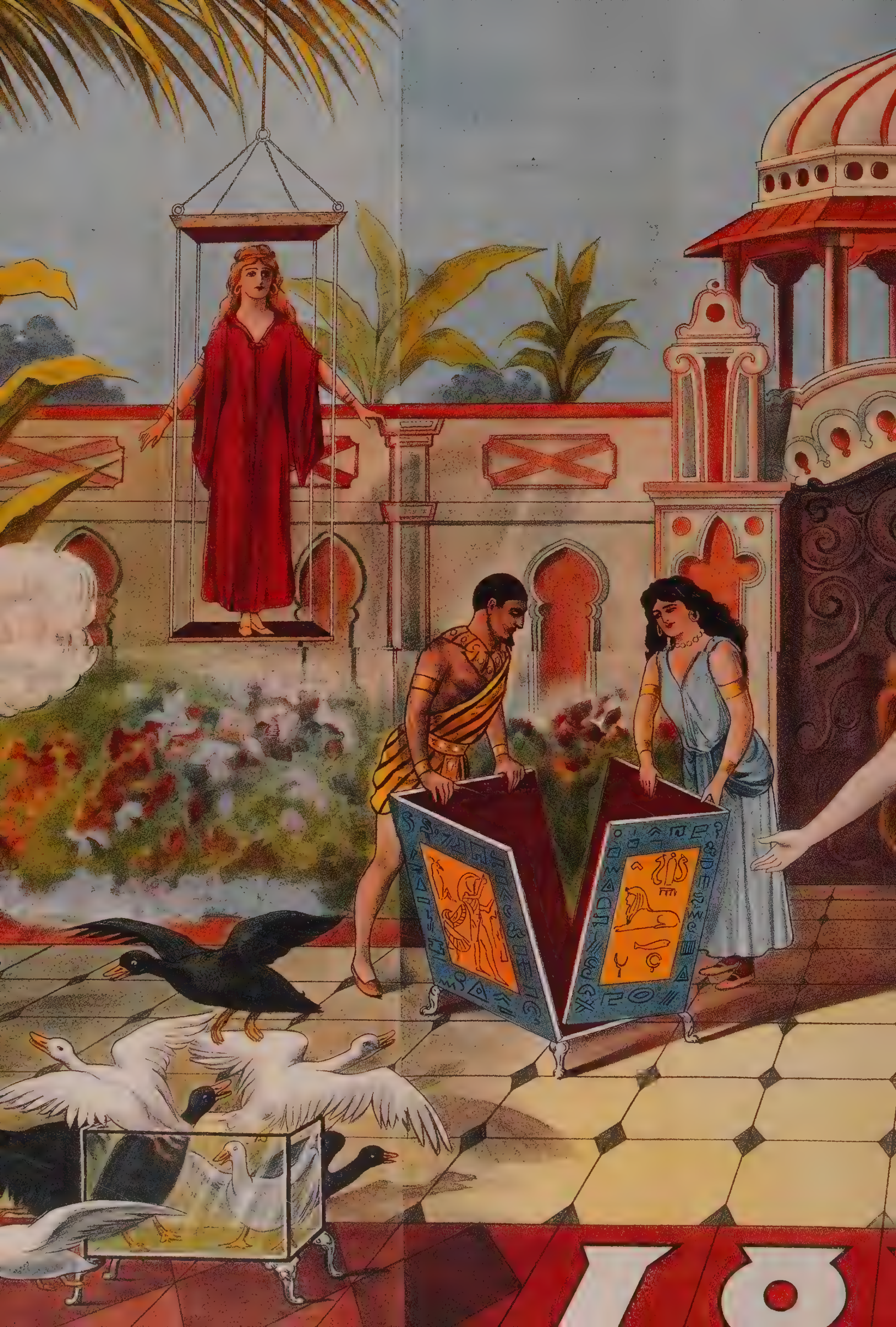
BELOW: **1911** In 1909 Charles de Vere sold his magic business to create an elaborate touring illusion act called *Ionia – The Goddess of Mystery* for his daughter Clementine. He obtained the finest equipment, costumes, set decorations, and posters such as these. Ionia enjoyed her greatest success in England, where these posters were produced. Her natural beauty greatly enhanced the act, but her illusions were in truth standard fare.

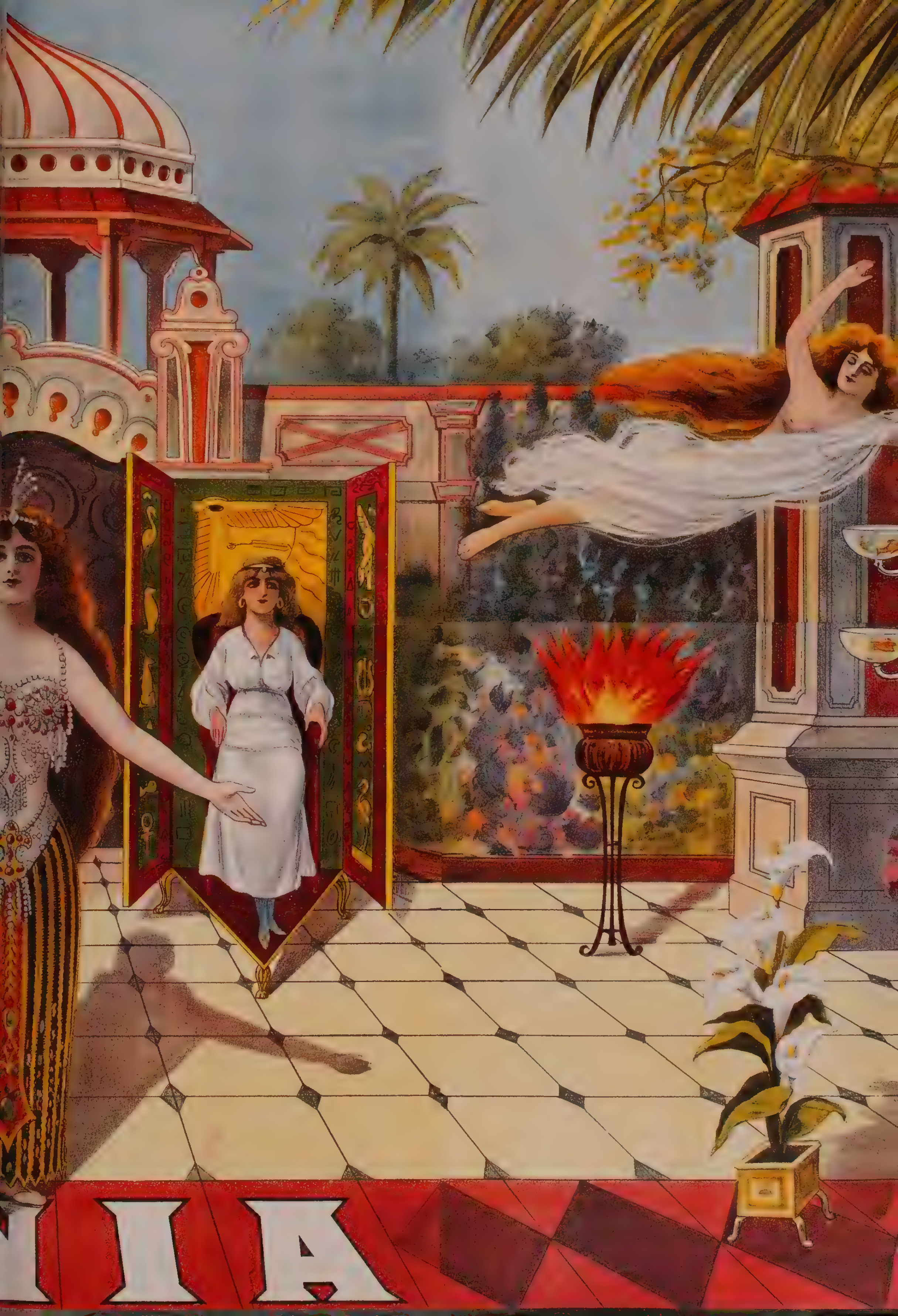
PAGES 376–377: **1911** After performing for just one year, Ionia disappeared from the stage. Her father attempted to recoup part of his investment by selling the illusions and the remaining posters. For many years, the name Ionia was known only to collectors of the exquisitely produced and rare lithographs such as this that she left behind.



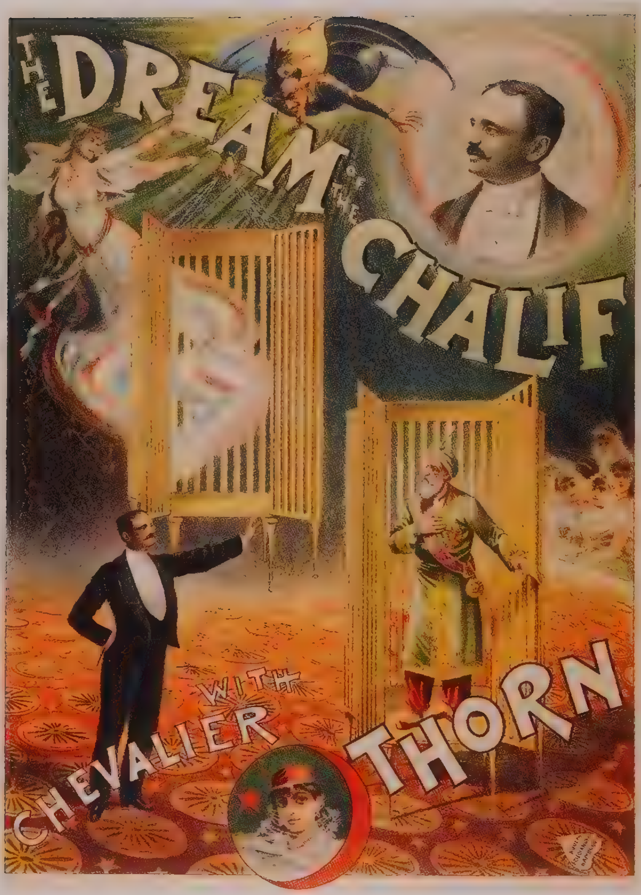



IONIA
L'ENCHANTRESSE

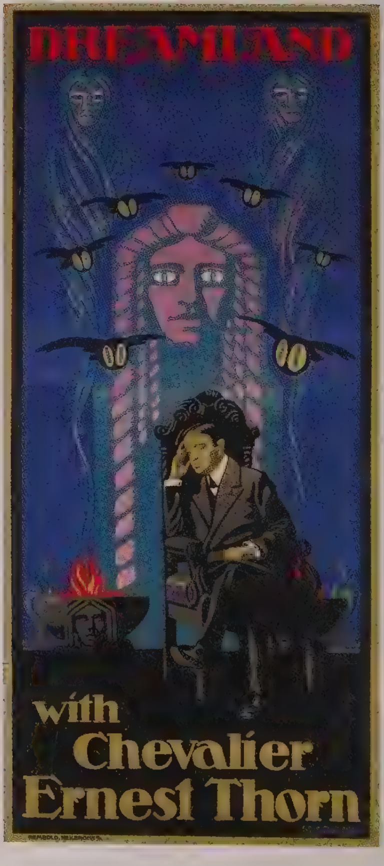



NIA

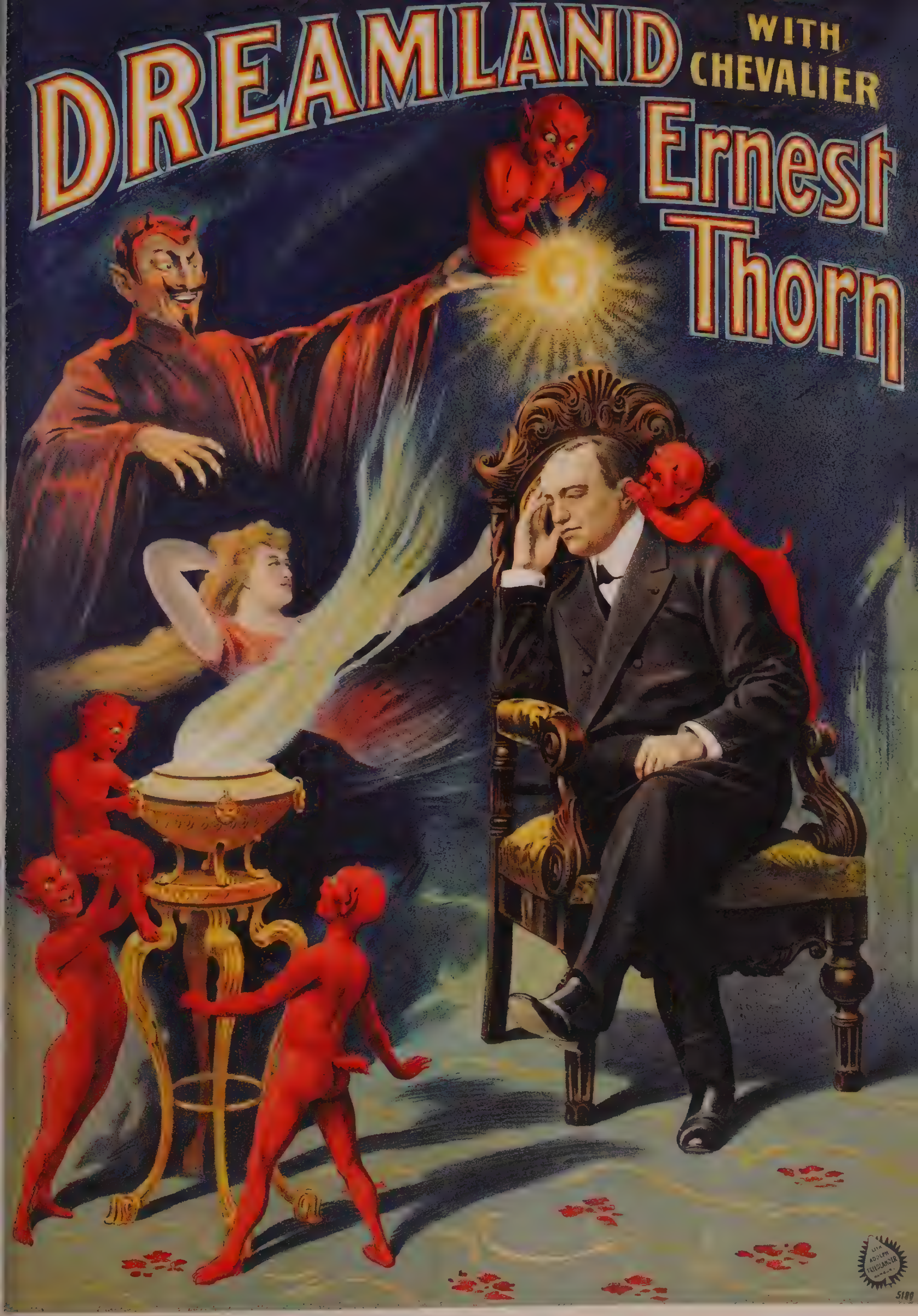
OPPOSITE: **1910** While Thorn enjoyed success as a magician around the world, he was not as fortunate with other business ventures. His attempt to manage a couple of music halls in Europe wiped out most of his savings, and he died in relative poverty in 1928.


THE DREAM OF THE CHALIF
WITH
CHEVALIER THORN

ABOVE: **ca. 1894–95** Austrian magician Chevalier Ernest Thorn and his wife, Julia, were among the earliest of the great illusionists who toured the world. Shown here is an illusion of Thorn's own devising called the Dream of the Chalif. An assistant is transported invisibly from one cabinet to another one suspended on the opposite side of the stage.



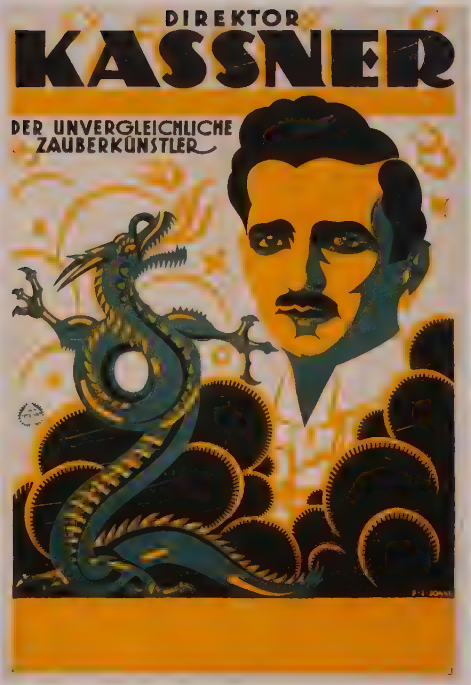
RIGHT: **ca. 1910** Thorn's show, which he called *An Evening in Dreamland*, was filled with many original effects, including the Noah's Ark illusion, not pictured, that was later featured by a number of illusionists.

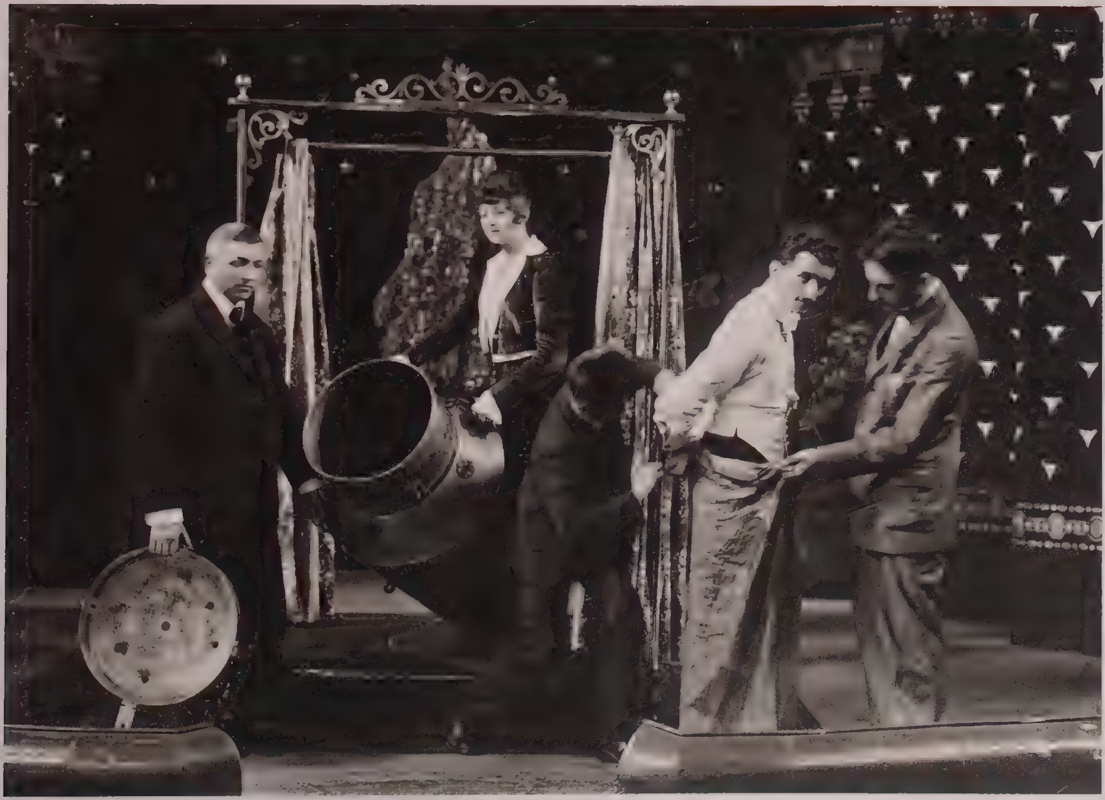

DREAMLAND
WITH
CHEVALIER
Ernest
Thorn
LITH
ADOLPH
FRIEDLANDER
HAMBURG
5189

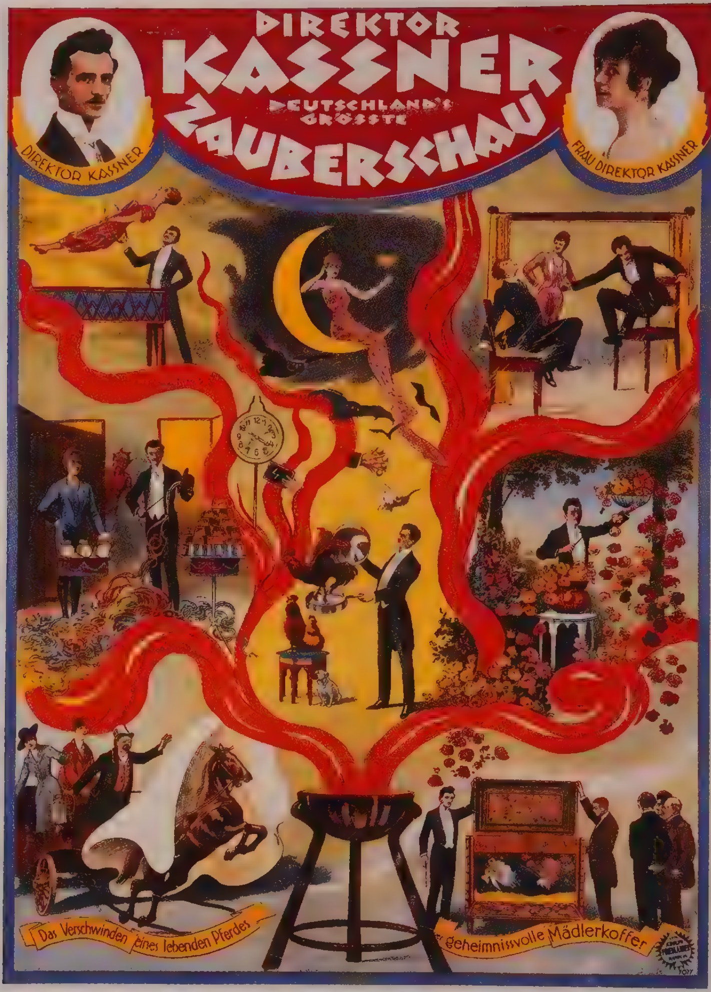
OPPOSITE: **ca. 1925** In this poster detail, opposite, Alois Kassner performs his version of an escape made famous by Harry Houdini: the Milk Can Escape. Confined in a steel can, the magician escapes without touching the locks. The devilish accomplice in this poster suggests that Kassner relied on supernatural assistance to effect his escape.

RIGHT: **1927** Germany's Alois Kassner assembled a gigantic illusion show during the pre–World War II years but confined his touring to Central Europe. The artwork in this poster was a distinct departure from what was being employed by most magicians. The stylized portrait and Art Deco overtone reflect Kassner's attempt to modernize his advertising.

BELOW: **ca. 1925** Whereas Houdini escaped from a can filled with water, Kassner eliminated the water and instead allowed himself to be tied into a cloth sack with his hands restrained behind his back. With the lid of the can secured with four padlocks, Kassner effected his escape within the privacy of the curtained cabinet you can see in this photo.



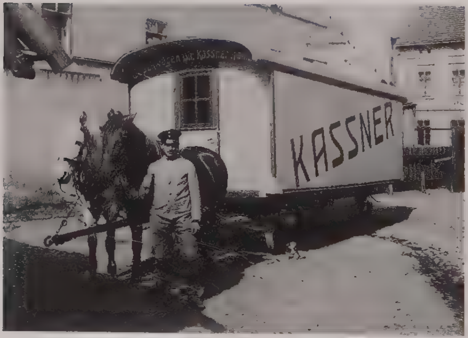



DIREKTOR
KASSNER
DEUTSCHLAND'S GRÖSSTE
ZAUBERSCHAU
DIREKTOR KASSNER
FRAU DIREKTOR KASSNER
Das Verschwinden eines lebenden Pferdes
geheimnissvolle Mädlerkoffer

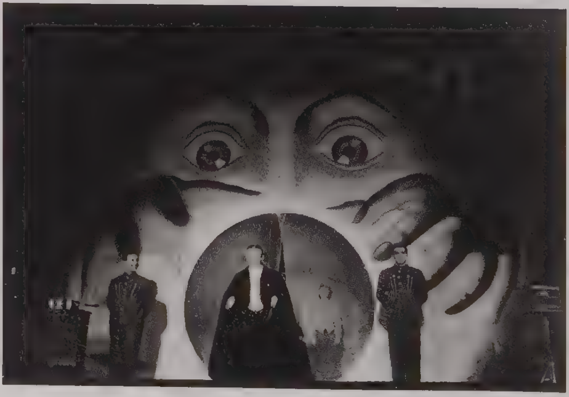
LEFT: **1921** The enormity of Kassner's show was due in part to Chevalier Ernest Thorn, the great Austrian illusionist, who'd come before him. When Thorn retired in 1923, Kassner purchased many of his illusions. And while the effects pictured on this Adolph Friedländer poster were typical magician's fare at the time, Kassner was careful to create a unique presentation for each illusion.

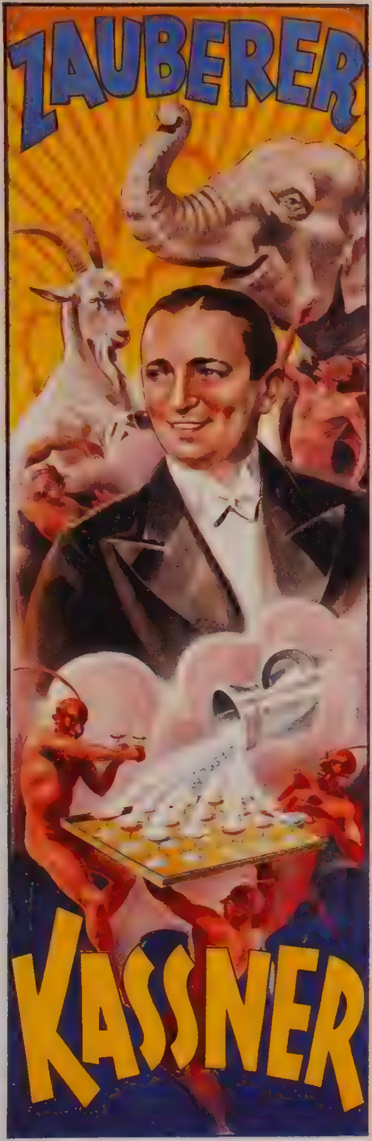
OPPOSITE LEFT: **1935** Kassner could pour any drink requested by the audience from his inexhaustible pitcher. Such tricks allowed him to express his personality and connect with the audience as he passed out beverages to lucky spectators. Behind Kassner is his signature illusion, Toto the Vanishing Elephant, which generated welcome publicity.

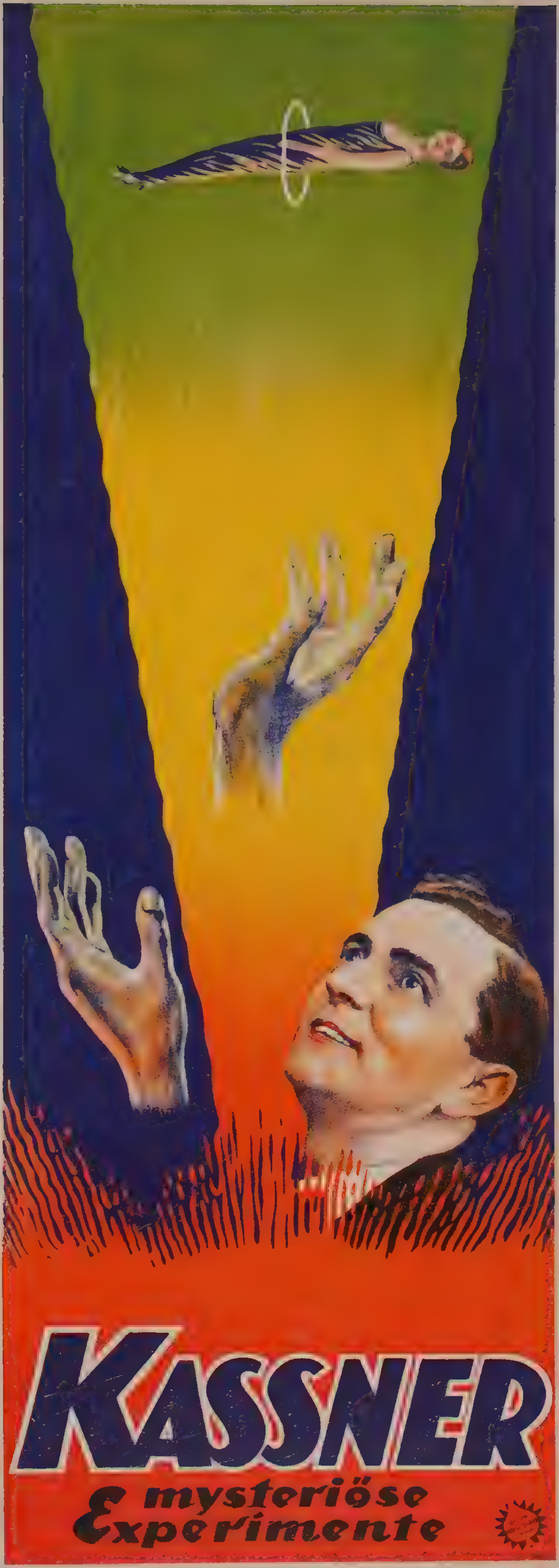
BELOW: **1940** Kassner and company appeared at the historic Ronacher Theater in Vienna, Austria, which still exists today. Small tricks such as the ones shown on the side tables in this photograph, at stage left and right, can be greatly enhanced by the addition of smartly costumed assistants and spectacular painted scenery.



ABOVE: **ca. 1925** Baggage cars such as this one were transported from town to town on railroad flatcars. Horsepower was then used to move the cars from the train station to the theater. A caravan of these cars being pulled down the street, with Kassner's name brightly painted on the side, was bound to pique audiences' interest.




ZAUBERER
KASSNER

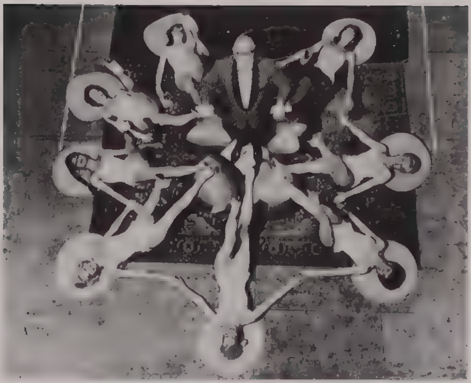

KASSNER
mysteriöse
Experimente

RIGHT: **1927** This image showcases Kassner's spectacular levitation illusion, where the woman floated almost out of the audience's view. Most of Kassner's posters were produced by Hamburg's Adolph Friedländer Lithograph Company. Between 1872 and 1935, it was the top lithographer for circuses and variety artists working in Europe.

LEFT: **ca. 1954** Germany's Helmut Schreiber, a.k.a. Kalanag, achieved fame during World War II. His chief assistant (and wife) was Gloria de Vos. Billed as "the most beautiful woman in magic," this former Miss Hamburg was sometimes concealed in close quarters with a leopard. London's *Evening News* said of her, "Gloria strongly recalls Marlene Dietrich of her younger days."

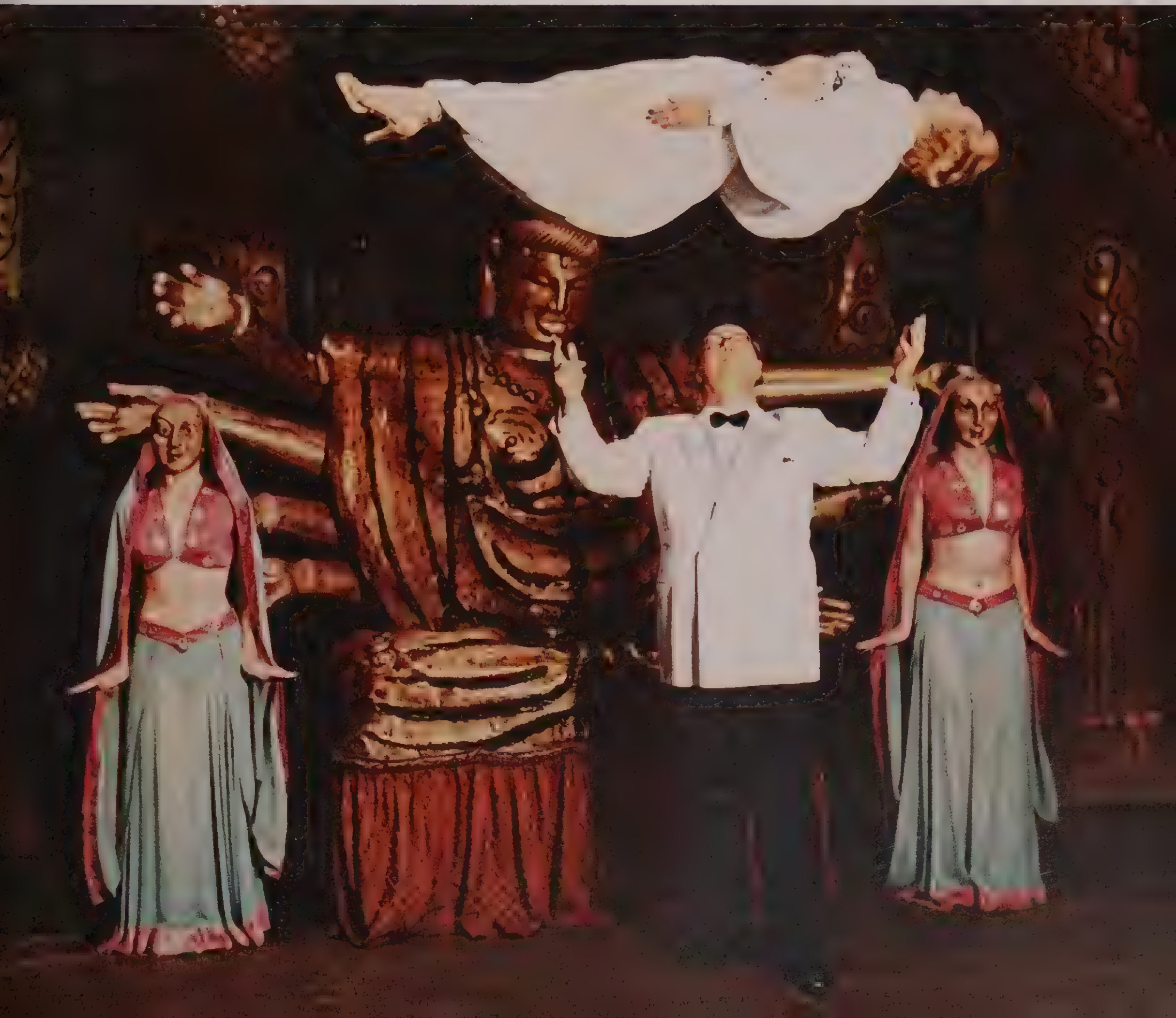
BELOW: **ca. 1945** Kalanag's show was populated with beautiful assistants—to the point that some patrons considered it to be as much a girlie revue as a magic show. In 1957, Kalanag unsuccessfully toured the United States. In Detroit, leaflets were distributed proclaiming Kalanag's Nazi affiliation.

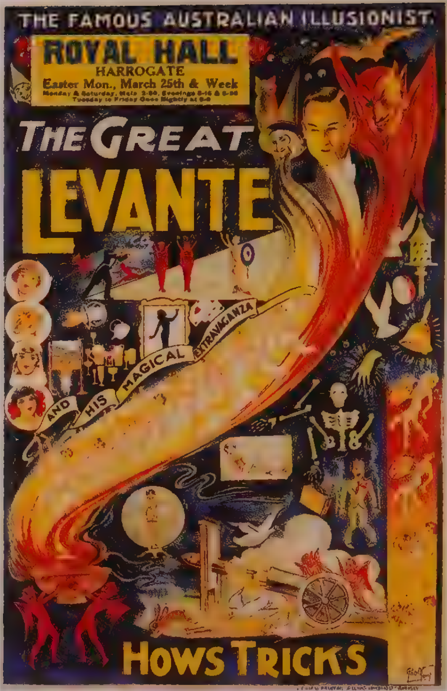
OPPOSITE LEFT: **ca. 1954** While there is no question that Kalanag, seen here on a program cover, entertained Hermann Göring and Adolf Hitler, he denied being a member of the Nazi Party. In defense of these performances, Kalanag said in the January 6, 1950, edition of the German newspaper *Lübecker Nachrichten*, "[Y]ou know what happened if you refused such an invitation. Therefore, I have no guilty conscience."



BELOW: **ca. 1950** In an effort to baffle not only laymen but also his fellow magicians, Kalanag used three entirely different technologies in his spectacular levitation illusion. For the transitions between these methods to remain undetected by the audience, the many assistants, both onstage and off, had to perform their duties in perfect harmony.

ABOVE: **ca. 1945** Kalanag's willingness to perform at Nazi functions made him the favorite magician of the Third Reich. Before World War II he had been a successful film producer. He certainly would have been aware of the trademark camera work of Busby Berkeley's films, and that awareness shows in this Kalanag publicity photo.




THE FAMOUS AUSTRALIAN ILLUSIONIST
ROYAL HALL
HARROGATE
Easter Mon., March 25th & Week
THE GREAT
LEVANTE
AND HIS MAGICAL EXTRAVAGANZA
HOWS TRICKS

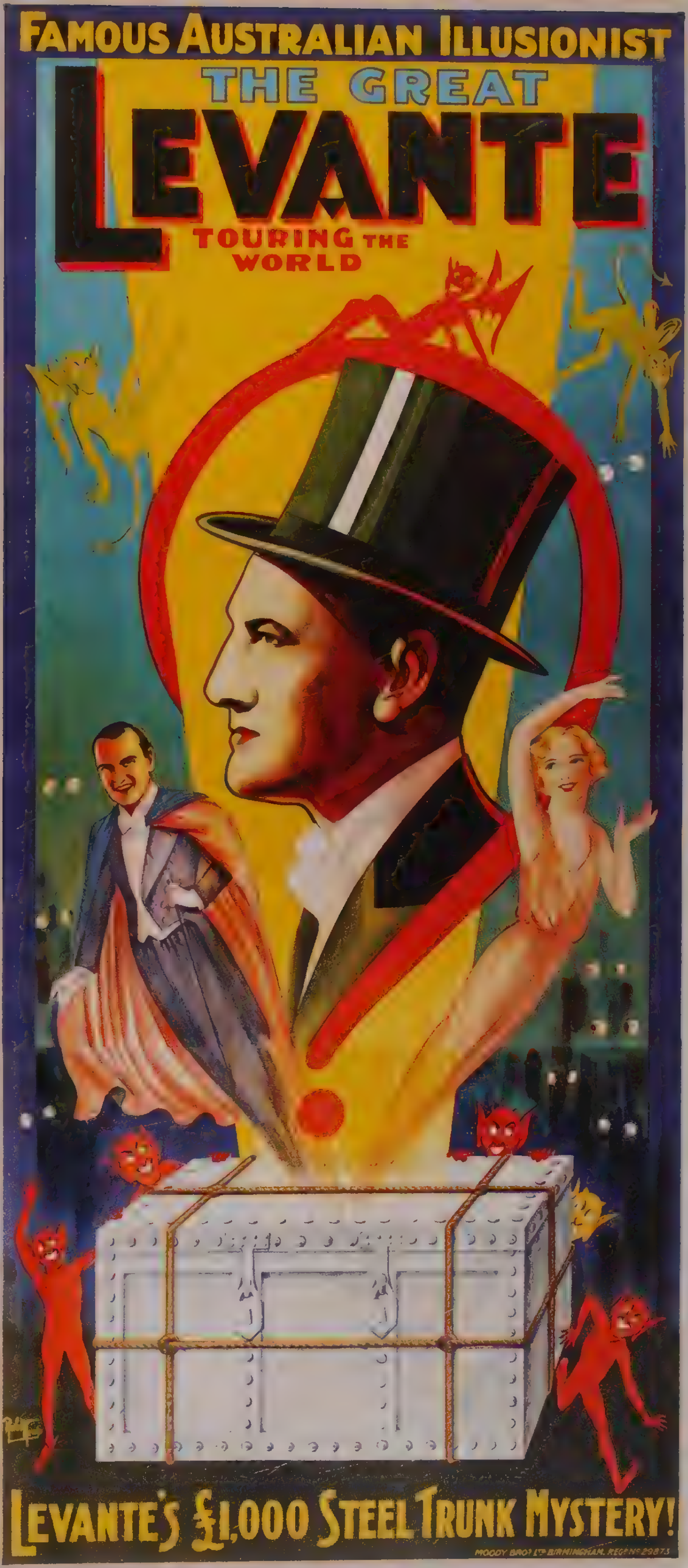
ABOVE: **1949** After multiple world tours, Australia's most famous touring illusionist, Les Levante, took a scaled-down show through Australia's outback, where amenities were scarce. Once, virulent white ants devoured the supports under the stage; just before the curtain went up, a cabinet with numerous assistants concealed inside went crashing through the weakened floor.

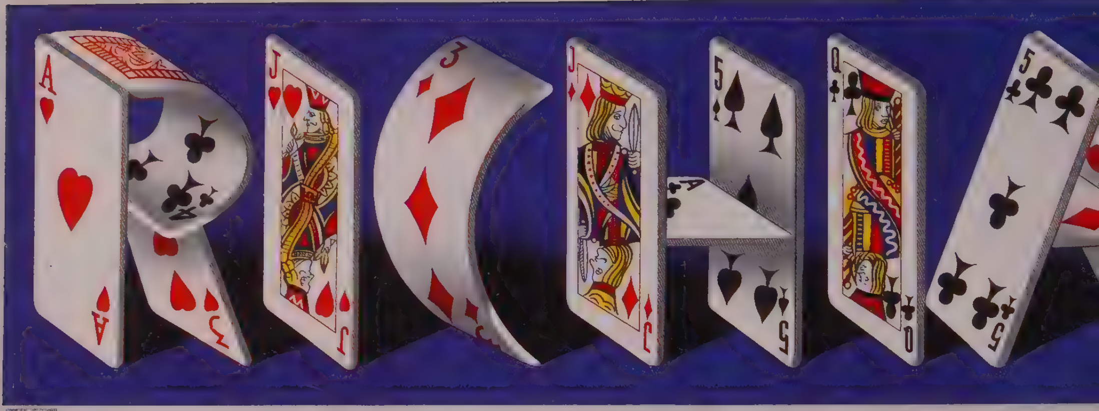
CHINA JAPAN INDIA CANADA BORNEO EGYPT
GREAT LEVANTE
3RD WORLD TOUR

OPPOSITE RIGHT: **1940** This poster represents another example of one magician's illusions being passed down to another. In 1937 the Great Leon, a retired vaudeville headliner, sold several original illusions to Les Levante. Illustrated on this Levante poster are the Great Leon's famous Death Ray Gun, Fire and Water, and Shooting through a Woman.

OPPOSITE BOTTOM: **ca. 1955** "One big happy family" is how the cast and crew of Levante's company described themselves. Between the years 1954 and 1958, Levante took his revue, *How's Tricks?*, on its third world tour. It was certainly economical for the entire company to travel by bus, and some cast members even claimed that their soundest sleep came aboard their house on wheels.

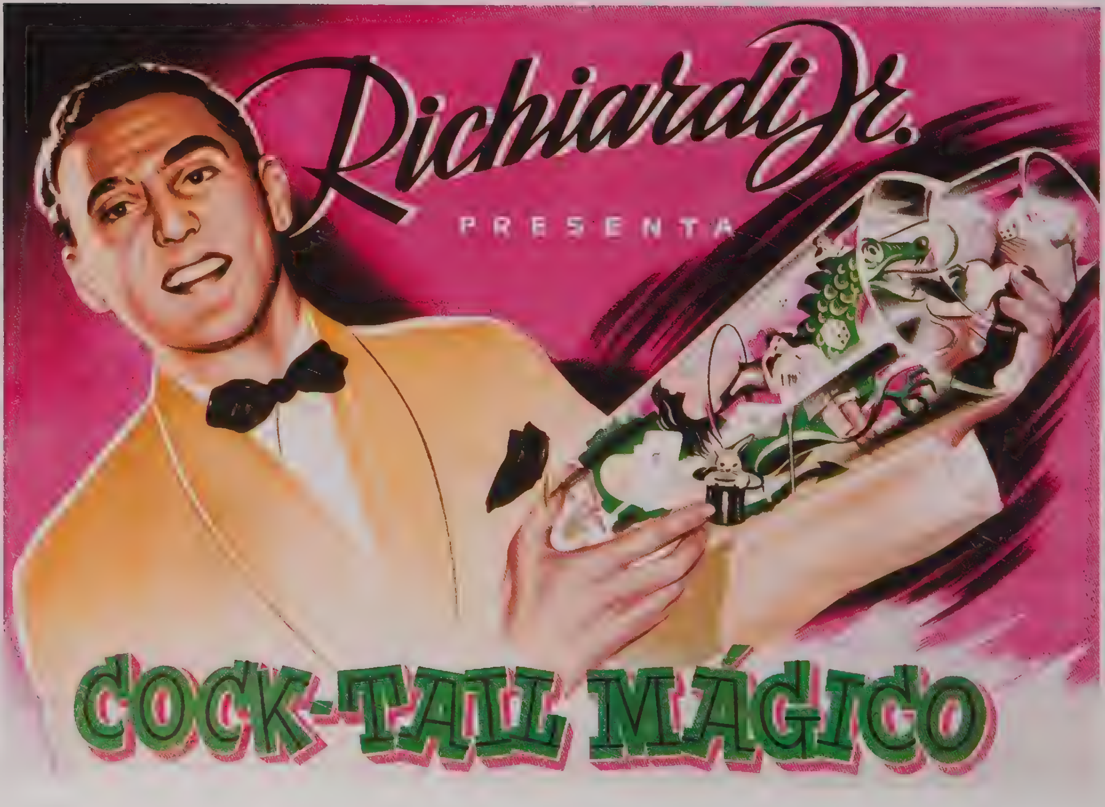
RIGHT: **1934** Levante's version of Houdini's famous escape act Metamorphosis used a trunk made entirely of steel. The trunk would be displayed in front of the theater so that curious people could examine it. On more than one occasion a young boy climbed inside and the lid slammed shut, locking him inside. Not until Levante showed up with the key (and a newspaper reporter) was the boy set free. This harmless publicity stunt never failed to generate interest in his show.

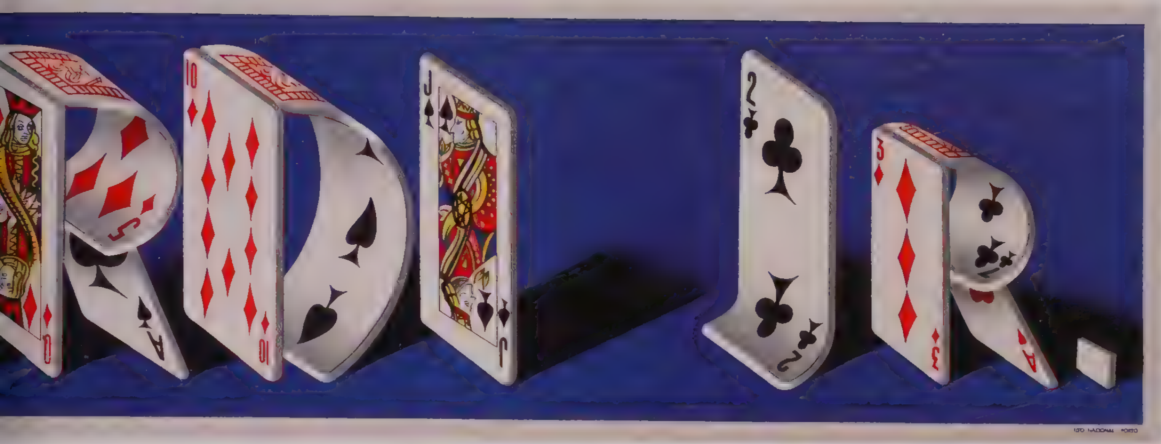

FAMOUS AUSTRALIAN ILLUSIONIST
THE GREAT
LEVANTE
TOURING THE WORLD
LEVANTE'S £1,000 STEEL TRUNK MYSTERY!
MOODY BROS LTD BIRMINGHAM. REGD No 29873



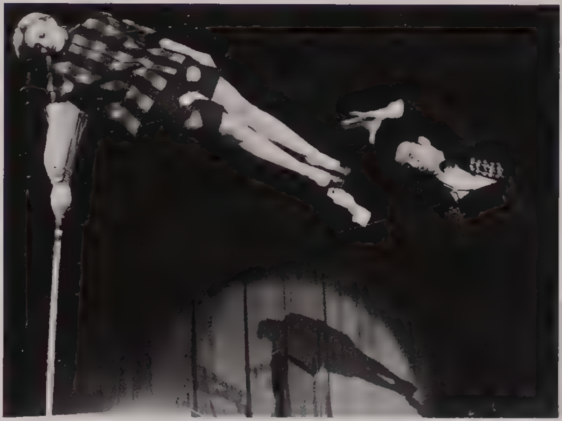
BELOW: ca. 1950s Richiardi was as comfortable performing before a sophisticated nightclub audience as he was onstage in the largest theater. The 1950s poster, below, suggests the glamour and optimism of the post–World War II nightclub era.

ABOVE: ca. 1950s During his long career, which began in Peru, Aldo Richiardi Jr. dazzled audiences around the world with his unique style and masterful presentations of classic illusions. A consummate magician's magician, he is considered by many to be the greatest illusionist of his generation.

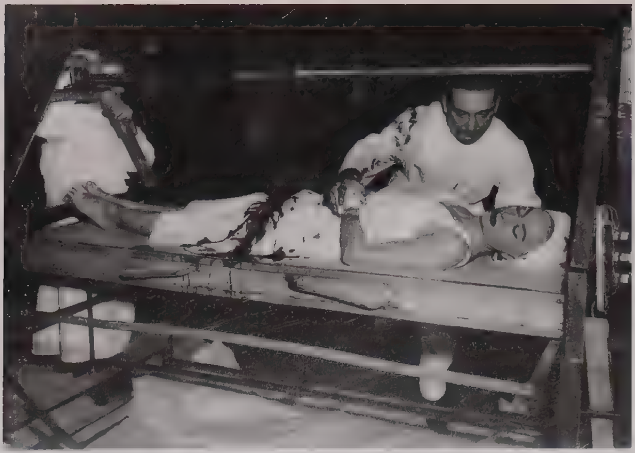




RIGHT: 1971 Richiardi's presentation of Robert-Houdin's famous 1852 invention, the Ethereal Suspension, was universally acclaimed as the greatest ever. Using a broom instead of the traditional metal pipe, he caused his daughter, Rina, to lie effortlessly in the air, supported by nothing more than the broom's straw bristles.

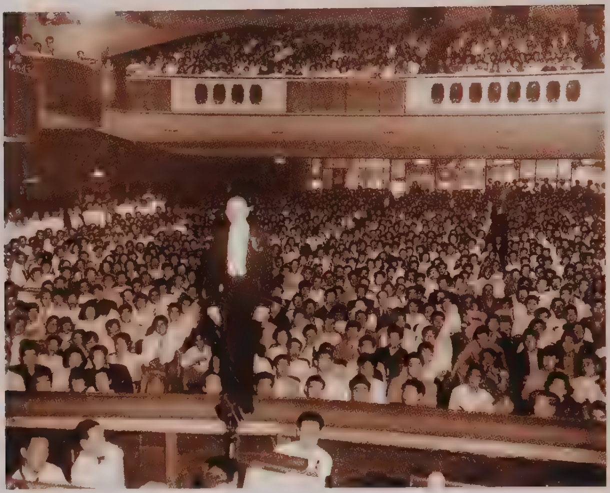


ABOVE AND RIGHT: 1971 Richiardi gave Horace Goldin's classic sawing-in-half illusion from 1931, the Living Miracle, a dramatic presentation. An enormous circular blade tore visibly through Rina, unleashing a torrent of blood and entrails. Shocked audience members were invited onstage for a closer look at the horrific scene before the victim was brought back to life.



RIGHT: **1937** England's Cecil Lyle made only one trip to the United States, and that was for a vacation, but while in Chicago he took the opportunity to visit the photographer known as Bloom, one of America's most respected theatrical photographers. The dramatic lighting in this portrait made him look less like a magician than like a Hollywood film star.

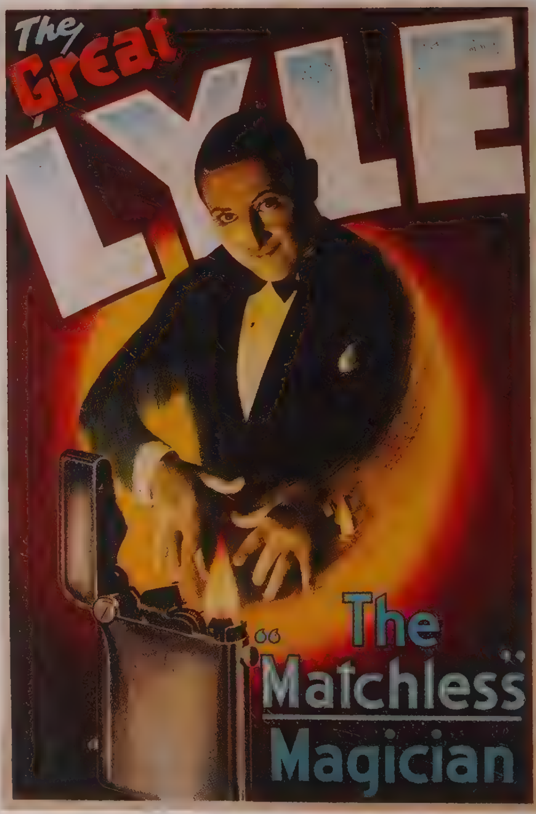
With best wishes
to W. Estes.
from
Lyle —
The Magician
London Aug. 1946



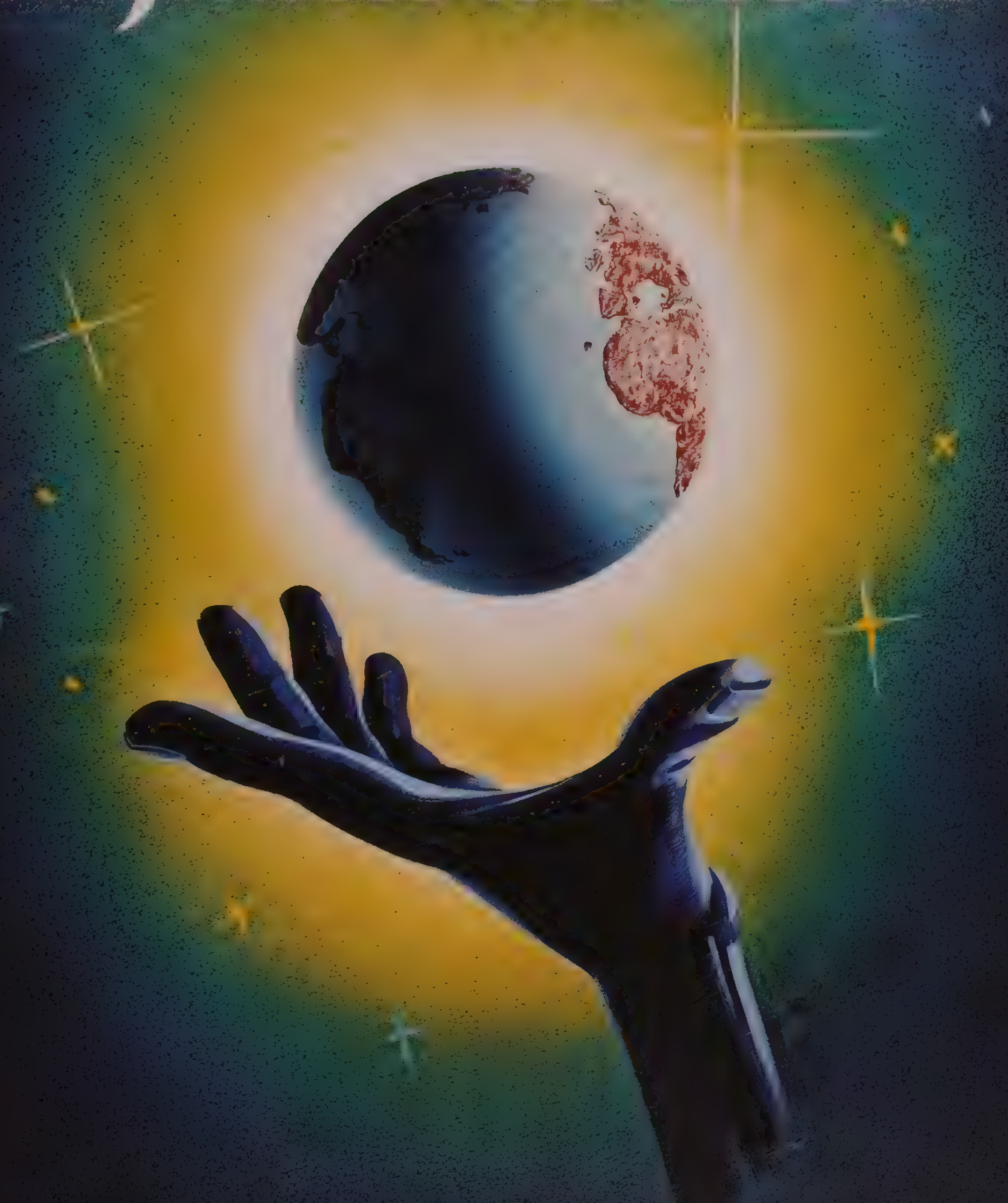
ABOVE: **1952** To get this unusual photograph, Cecil Lyle asked the audience at the Nichigeki Theater in Tokyo, Japan, to remain seated at the conclusion of the show. With the house lights on, and Lyle standing on the passerelle that runs between the orchestra pit and the audience, this packed house was captured on film.

RIGHT: **ca. 1945** Lyle, "The 'Matchless' Magician," extended the reign of the great touring illusion shows by presenting his *Mystery Box Revue* as late as 1953. He prided himself on presenting illusions from past masters, including Horace Goldin's Sawing a Lady in Half, R. W. Amac's Find the Lady, David Devant's Artist's Dream, and Arnold de Biere's Crystal Clock.

OPPOSITE: **1949** Lyle's career extended from the 1910s to the 1950s. While he mostly performed in the British Isles, he also toured the world. He was preparing for his 1955 tour when he died. This image of the globe as the magician's floating ball perfectly suits Lyle and the league of great touring illusionists who mystified the world into the 1950s.



Mystifies the World–

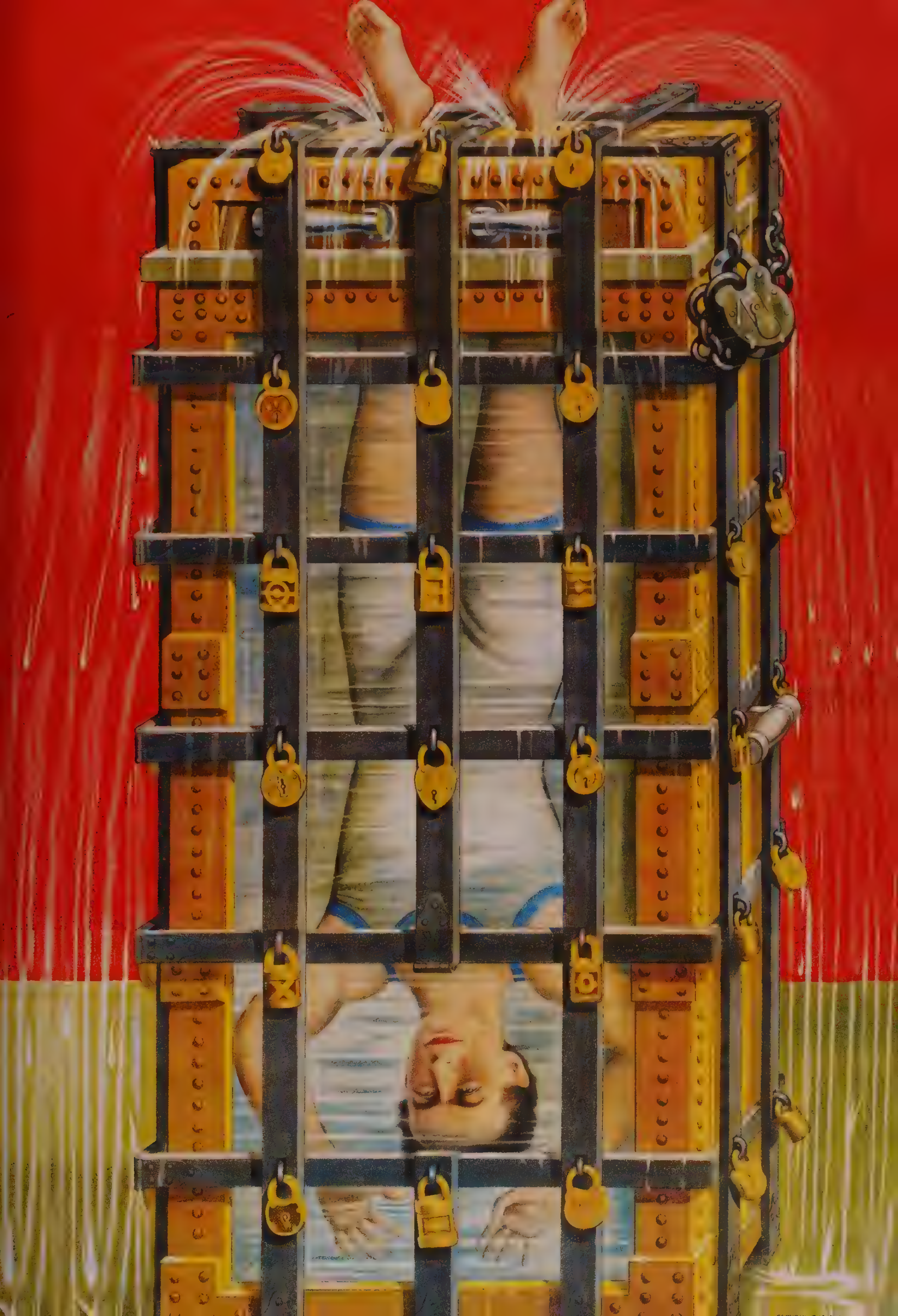


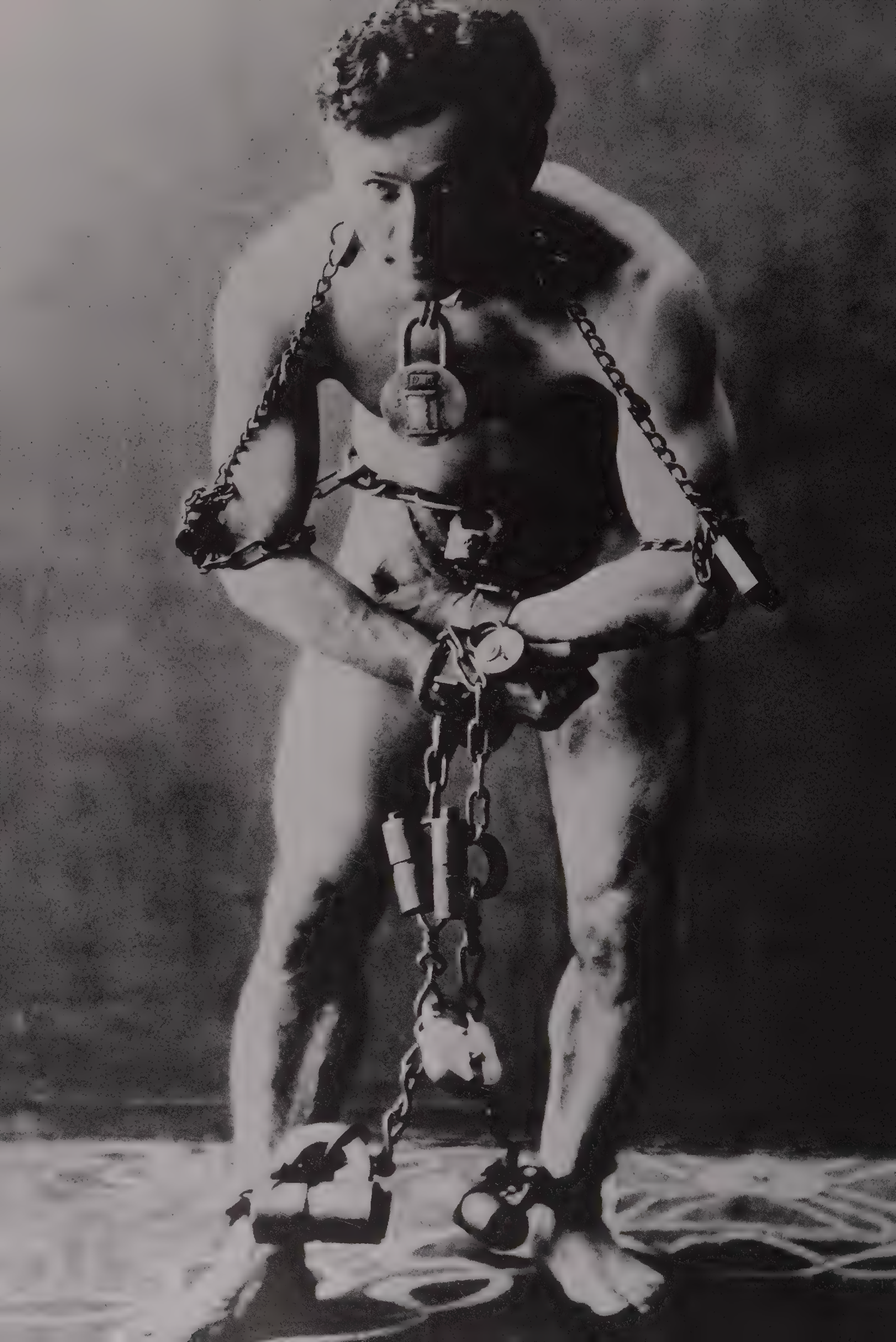
–THE GREAT LYLE

7

CHAINS, BLADES, BULLETS, AND FIRE: DARING AND DANGER IN MAGIC

Jim Steinmeyer





7

Jim Steinmeyer

CHAINS, BLADES, BULLETS, AND FIRE: DARING AND DANGER IN MAGIC

Professor Hoffmann's influential book *Modern Magic* (1876) starts with a simple premise: "There is a vast difference between telling how a trick is done and teaching how to do it." Hoffmann did the latter, and *Modern Magic* became such a fine textbook that it effectively froze the art in the Victorian age—dependent on decorative boxes, playing cards, and tin vases. As long as *Modern Magic* was a best seller, magic of the late 19th century was defined by its pretty tricks and clever knickknacks. But by the start of the 20th century, audiences were impatient for new marvels. Early cinema was promising action, adventure, and quick-cut thrills. Stage melodramas offered sensational effects woven into the stories. In 1899, *Ben-Hur* opened at the Broadway Theater in New York City, with real horses and real chariots galloping on a treadmill stage. In 1909, London's Drury Lane introduced *The Whip*, an elaborate spectacle that featured a full-size locomotive crashing onstage at every performance! Could stage magicians compete with such wonders?

PAGE 393: **1916** This poster of Houdini's famous Water Torture Cell shows the magician locked and trapped inside the tank of water, facing a drowning death if he fails to make his escape. The iron straps surrounding the tank were never used by Houdini, but they enhance the drama for the lithograph.

OPPOSITE: **ca. 1903** Walter Gibson, the noted magic author and a ghostwriter for Houdini, once explained that "Houdini was a Barnum who was also his own freak," a one-of-a-kind attraction who sold himself to the world. This famous image of the young escape artist casts Houdini as both victim and hero.

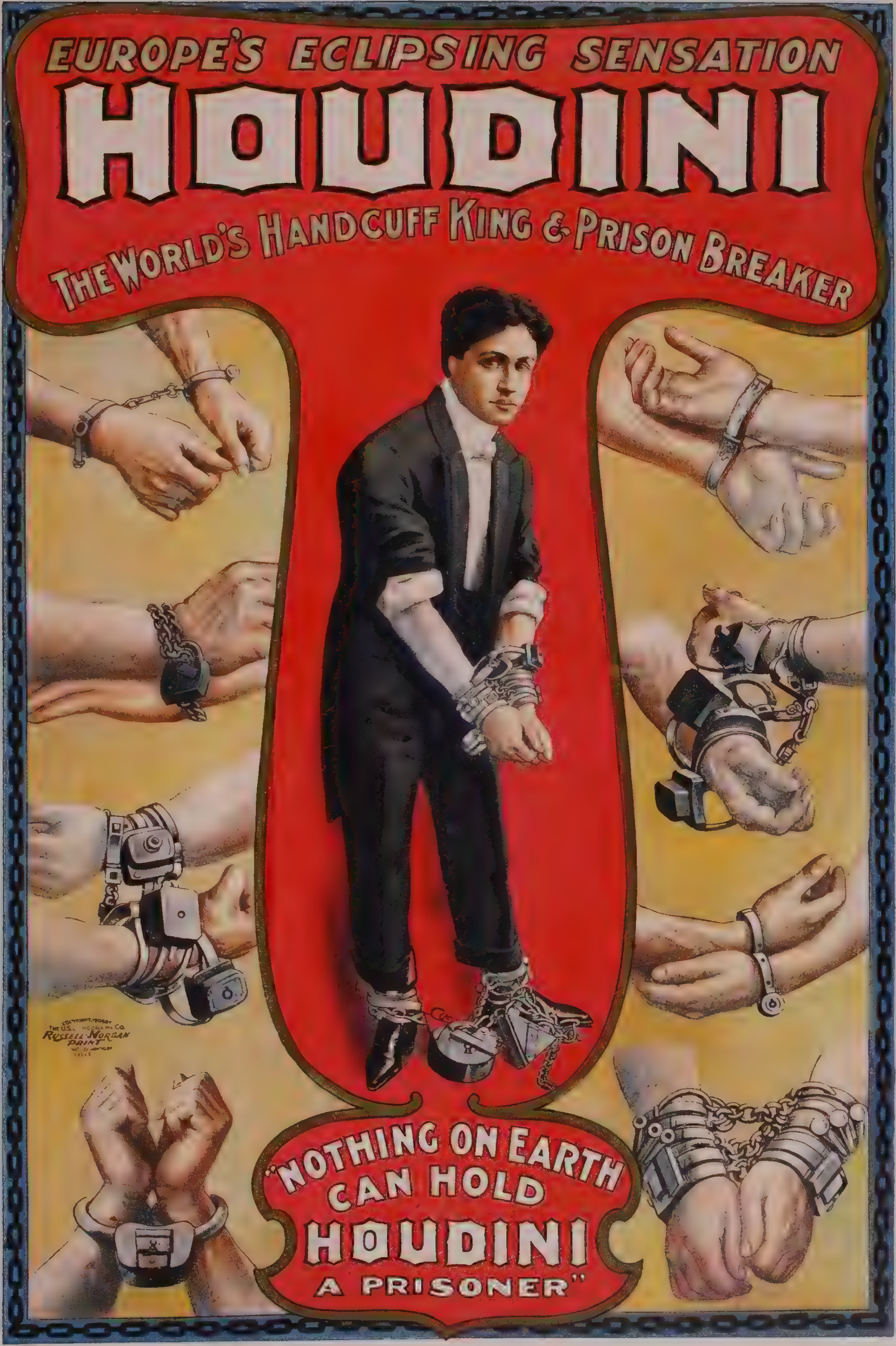
LEFT: **ca. 1900** Houdini's early advertising proclaimed him "the only magician to perform nude!" Part of the appeal of his act was his unusual, exhibitionist display of muscles. Many of Houdini's publicity photos deliberately emphasized this aspect of the performance, suggesting a modern sports figure.

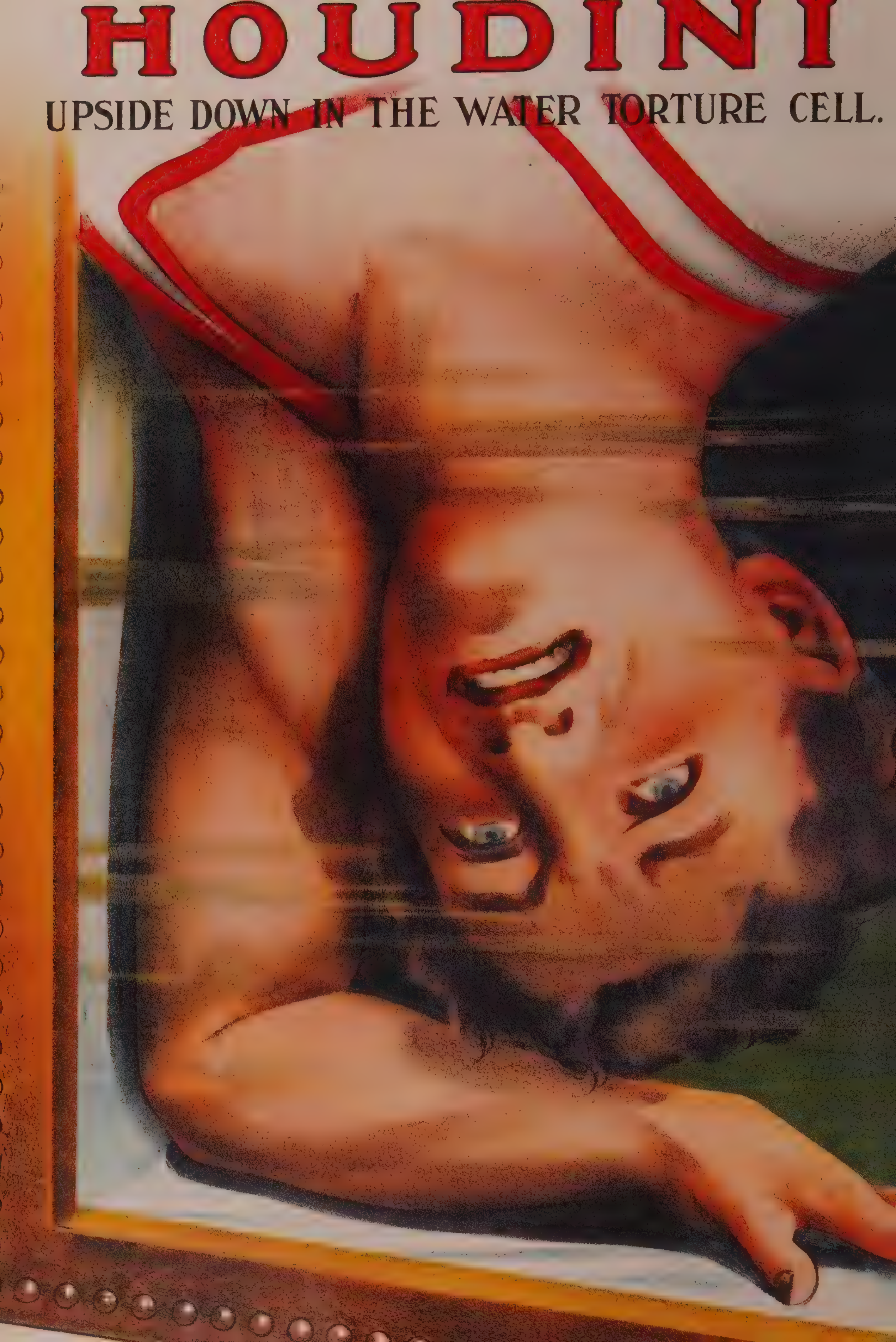
OPPOSITE: **1905** This beautiful poster offers equal billing to Houdini and the many daunting handcuff styles he had conquered. The poster artist used the cuffs as a motif; even the graphic border was turned into chain. Houdini appears, incongruously, in evening clothes and shackles—he is the ordinary man trapped by locksmiths and policemen.

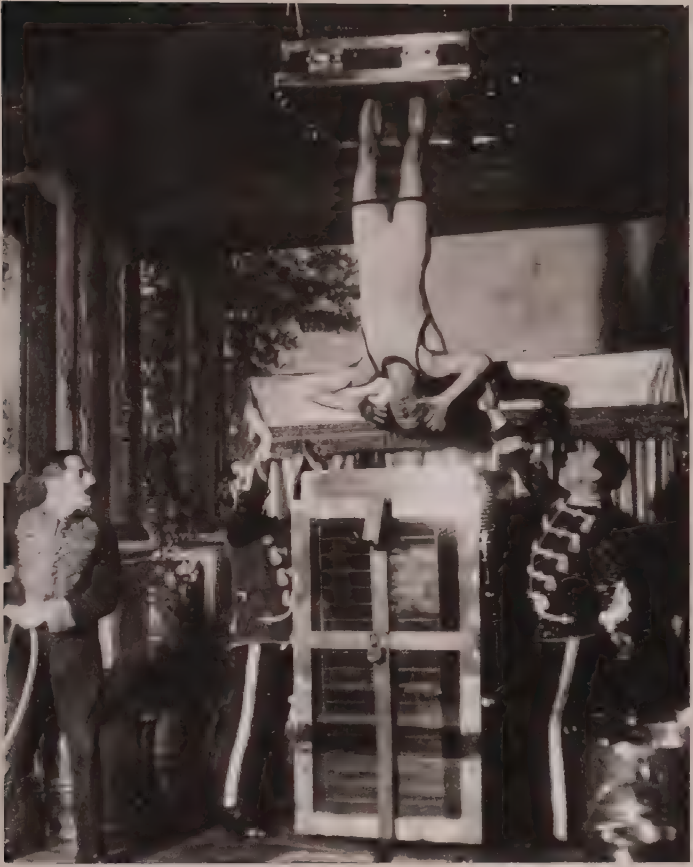
BELOW: **ca. 1920** Houdini was the master of the publicity stunt. The idea of escaping from a straitjacket while dangling upside down from a downtown building was guaranteed to draw thousands of onlookers. The trick was big, dangerous, and capable of stopping traffic.

Enter Harry Houdini

One solution came from unlikely origins: the mud-show circuses and big-city dime museums of the late 1890s. Ehrich Weiss was a young Hungarian immigrant to the United States. Born in Budapest in 1874 and raised in Appleton, Wisconsin, and then New York City, Weiss came to idealize magic's rich history and studied Professor Hoffmann's *Modern Magic*. He longed to be a classical wizard like the past masters, and even derived his stage name from the elegant French magician Jean Eugène Robert-Houdin. Ehrich Weiss began calling himself Harry Houdini. Early in his career, Houdini specialized in card tricks: riffles, shuffles, and intricate sleight of hand. It didn't work. Houdini always looked uncomfortable in the swallowtail coat that was fashionable at the time; he was short and muscular, with rounded shoulders and bowed legs. Onstage, his gray eyes burned with intensity, and he spoke with sharp, staccato enunciation, propelling his words across the footlights. When he introduced a fast-paced escape illusion he called Metamorphosis, he pioneered a new style (p. 429). Houdini had his wrists tied behind his back. He was placed into a cloth sack, and this was knotted tightly at the top. The sack was lifted into a large trunk that was then closed, locked, and encircled with


EUROPE'S ECLIPSING SENSATION
HOUDINI
THE WORLD'S HANDCUFF KING & PRISON BREAKER
RUSSELL-MORGAN PRINT
"NOTHING ON EARTH CAN HOLD HOUDINI A PRISONER"


HOUDINI
UPSIDE DOWN IN THE WATER TORTURE CELL.



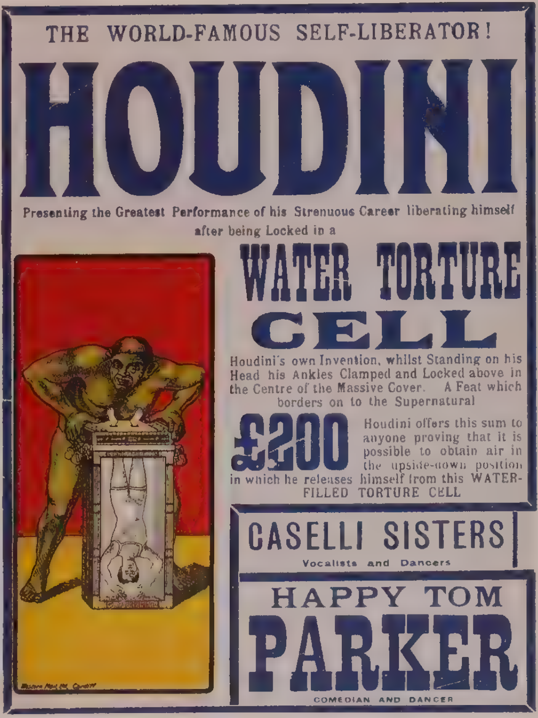
LEFT: **1913** Houdini takes his last deep breath before he is plunged into the water and the stocks are locked onto the top of the tank. Even being lifted high above the stage and swung by his ankles was dangerous. Shortly before his death in 1926, Houdini broke a bone in his ankle at this moment in the escape.

OPPOSITE: **ca. 1915** Magicians' posters are usually guilty of exaggeration. But here Houdini used a stark image to emphasize the simple drama of his famous Water Torture Cell. Instead of picturing the tank of water, the locks and hasps, Houdini's face told the entire story. Each performance was a life-or-death melodrama.

BELOW: **1913** Only the best acts received a colored, illustrated image on the bill. Notice the offer of £200 to anyone who could prove that Houdini "obtain[ed] air in the upside-down position." The challenge had nothing to do with the Water Torture Cell's secret, but it intrigued audiences and filled the theater.

ropes. The trunk was concealed for three seconds when his younger brother, Theo, pulled a curtain shut. When the curtain was opened, Houdini was seated on the trunk, completely free. The trunk was opened, the bag peeled away, and Theo was discovered in Houdini's place. Theo's wrists were now tied behind his back.

Houdini's new act attracted the attention of crowds and critics. He teamed up with a petite song-and-dance artist, Beatrice Rahner, and they were married in 1894. Houdini turned his attention to escapes, challenging audiences and local police to trap him within handcuffs, chains, and ropes. With his new act, he escaped fairgrounds and dime museums as a new star in vaudeville. When Houdini arrived in a city, he might promote his performances by being locked into a wooden box and thrown into the river, as thousands leaned over the bridge to witness the stunt (pp. 434–435). He might saunter into the local police station and offer to be stripped, searched, and then shackled in a jail cell. He always escaped. The public read about it the next day in the local newspaper. "I get more advertising space without paying for it than anyone," he once boasted to a group of publicity agents. Houdini challenged his audiences while befriending them at the same time—he was the little everyman, who held his head high and defied the



THE WORLD-FAMOUS SELF-LIBERATOR!

HOUDINI

Presenting the Greatest Performance of his Strenuous Career liberating himself after being Locked in a

WATER TORTURE CELL

Houdini's own Invention, whilst Standing on his Head his Ankles Clamped and Locked above in the Centre of the Massive Cover. A Feat which borders on to the Supernatural

£200 Houdini offers this sum to anyone proving that it is possible to obtain air in the upside-down position in which he releases himself from this WATER-FILLED TORTURE CELL

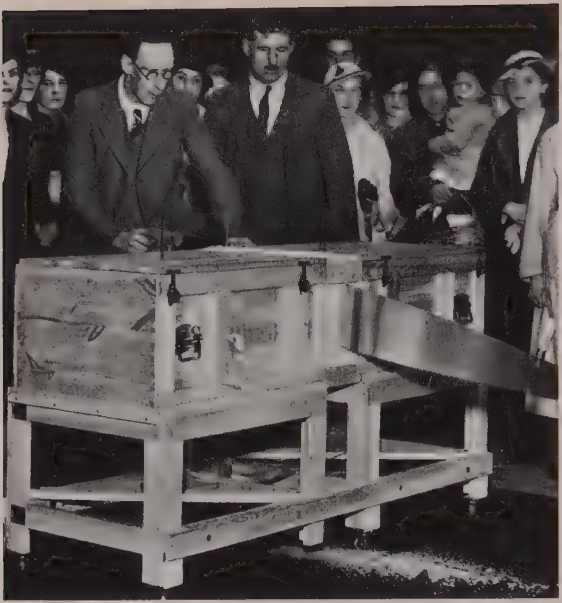
CASELLI SISTERS

Vocalists and Dancers

HAPPY TOM

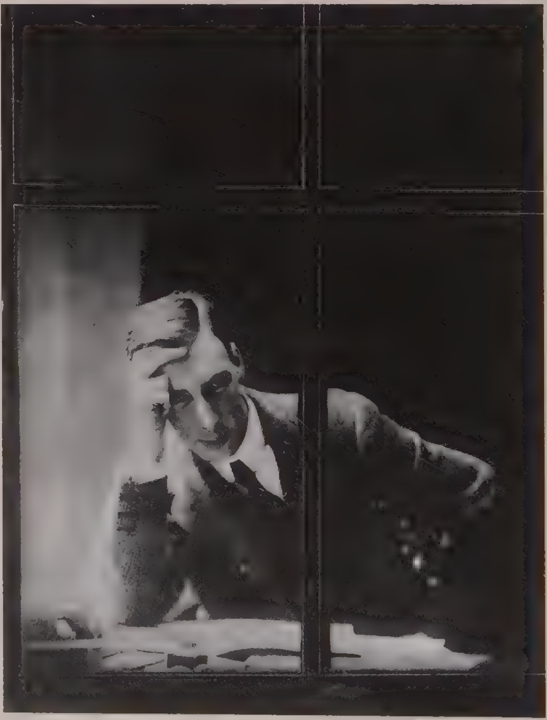
PARKER

COMEDIAN AND DANCER



LEFT: **ca. 1930** P. T. Selbit was a British illusionist and music-hall act specializing in sensational magic. At the end of 1920, he introduced his latest feature. A woman was tied inside a wooden packing box, and the box was sawed in half. Sawing Through a Woman, the original version of the Sawing a Lady in Half illusion, became an overnight sensation, and spawned countless imitations. Later versions used painted boxes and special apparatus. By most accounts, Selbit's was the best for its simplicity and drama.

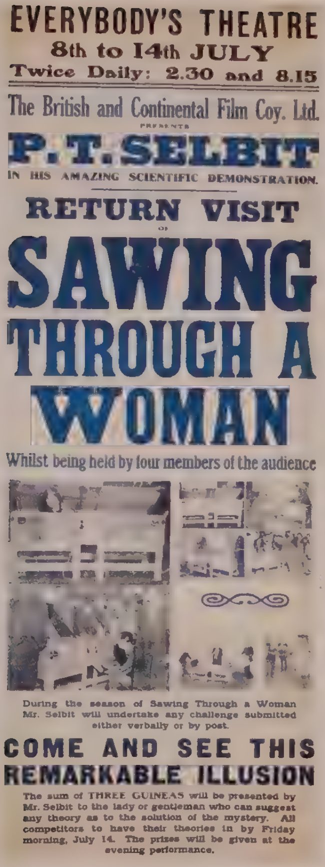
BELOW: **1910** P. T. Selbit was born Percy Thomas Tibbles in London in 1881. He reversed the spelling of his name for the stage and became famous among his fellow magicians for his amazing inventions. His early illusions included the Man Without a Middle, and Shadow People, in which assistants emerged from an empty window.



entire world. "Nothing Can Hold Houdini a Prisoner!" his posters proclaimed. For almost 30 years, over a renowned career, it truly seemed that way. When he toured England and Germany, his winning smile, swaggering presentations, and athletic skills seemed to personify America as a proud, aggressive new nation of immigrants.

Not Merely an Escape... A Supernatural Feat

Houdini introduced new and more spectacular wonders. His most famous escape was the Water Torture Cell, created in 1913. It was a tall, narrow wooden tank of water, with a glass front. Houdini's ankles were locked into stocks, and he was lifted upside-down over the stage. Suspended over the tank of water, he paused to take several deep breaths, and then he was quickly lowered into the cell, the stocks locked to the lid of the tank (pp. 440–441). A drape was pulled around the tank, temporarily concealing it. The theater orchestra ominously played a popular song called "Asleep in the Deep." A murmur went through the audience, as they considered Houdini's peril. Surely it was now too long for him to hold his breath. Something must be wrong, they whispered to each other. Houdini's assistant peered into the curtain, and brandished an ax, ready to



EVERYBODY'S THEATRE
8th to 14th JULY
Twice Daily: 2.30 and 8.15

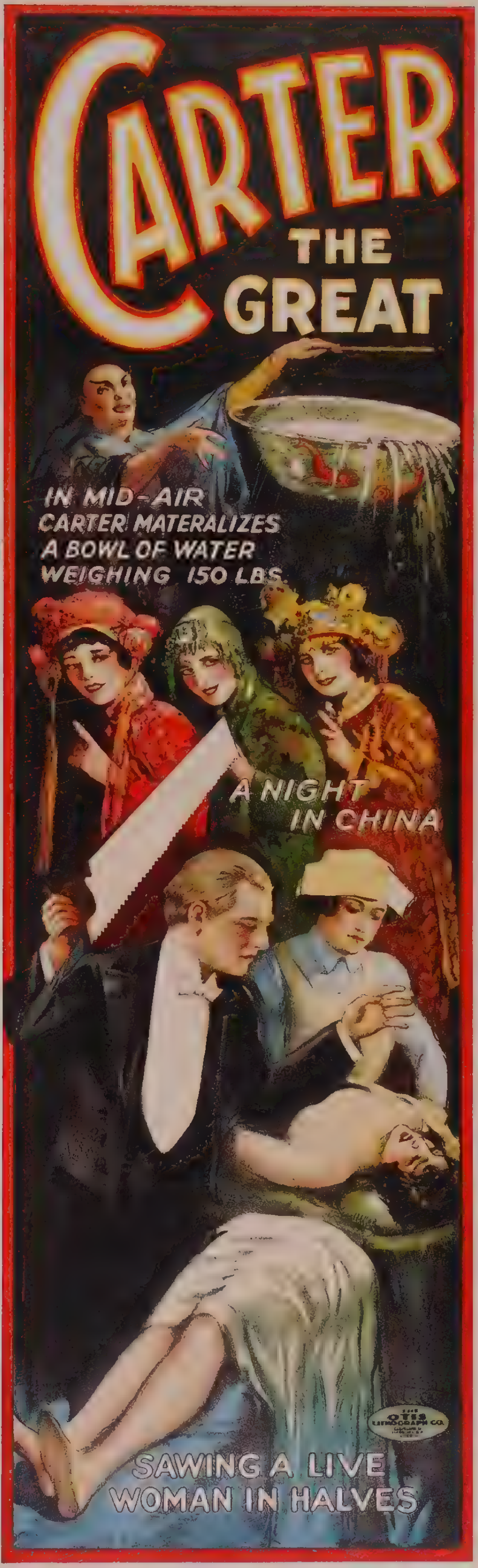
The British and Continental Film Coy. Ltd.
PRESENTS
P. T. SELBIT
IN HIS AMAZING SCIENTIFIC DEMONSTRATION.

RETURN VISIT
OF
SAWING THROUGH A WOMAN
Whilst being held by four members of the audience

During the season of Sawing Through a Woman Mr. Selbit will undertake any challenge submitted either verbally or by post.

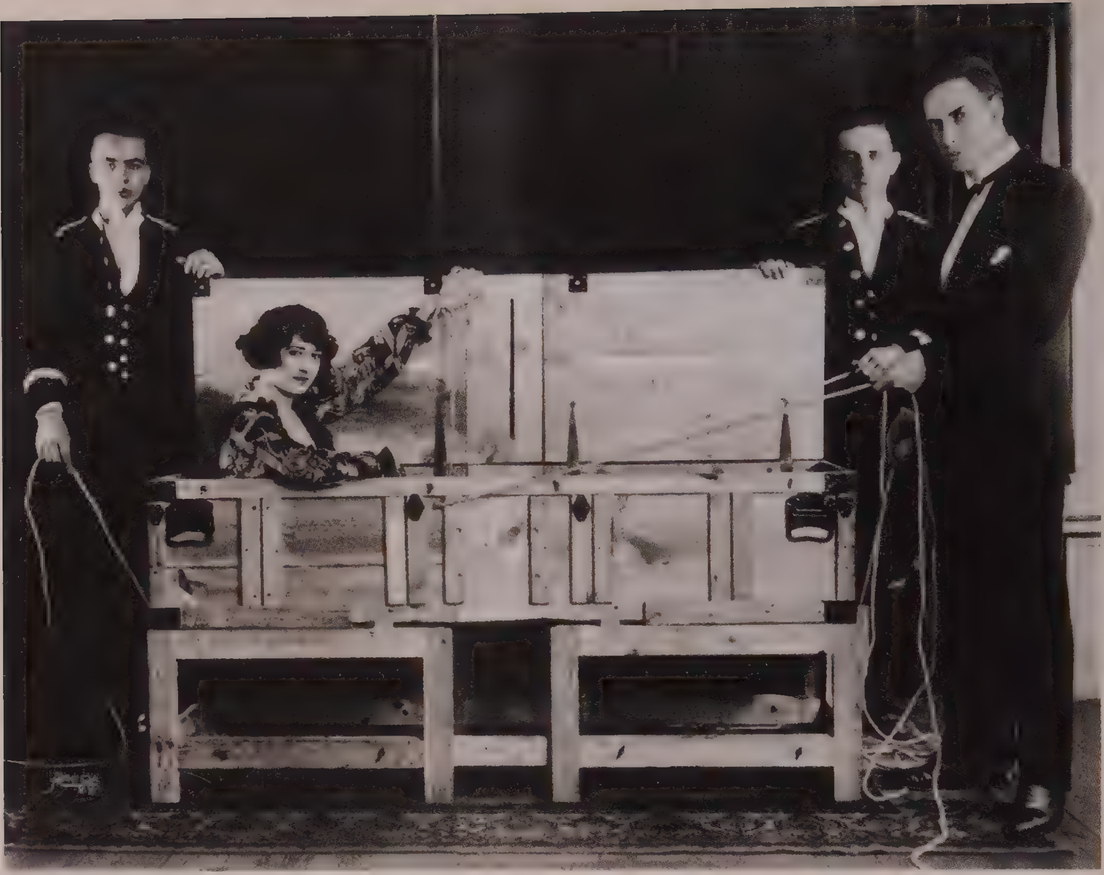
COME AND SEE THIS REMARKABLE ILLUSION

The sum of THREE GUINEAS will be presented by Mr. Selbit to the lady or gentleman who can suggest any theory as to the solution of the mystery. All competitors to have their theories in by Friday morning, July 14. The prizes will be given at the evening performance.


CARTER THE GREAT
IN MID-AIR CARTER MATERALIZES A BOWL OF WATER WEIGHING 150 LBS
A NIGHT IN CHINA
THE OTIS LITHOGRAPH CO.
SAWING A LIVE WOMAN IN HALVES

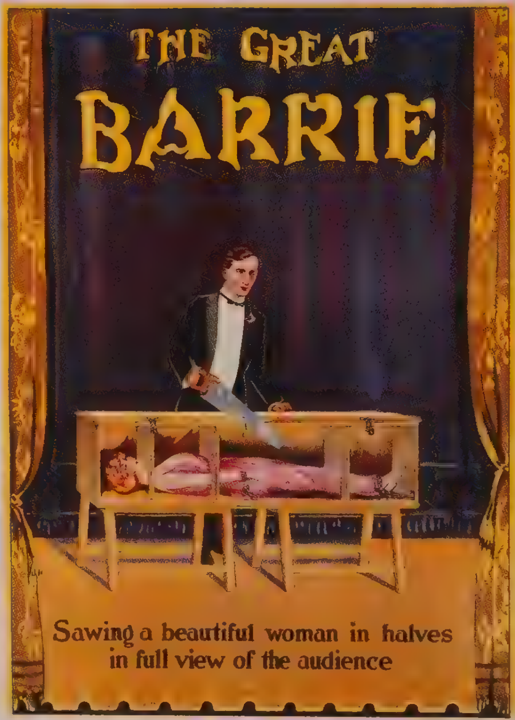
ABOVE: **1931** A decade after he first performed it, Selbit returned to music halls to once again present his "Amazing Scientific Demonstration." The trick was a careful mixture of challenge, melodrama, and scientific mumbo jumbo. The magician talked through the procedure, treating it as an odd experiment.

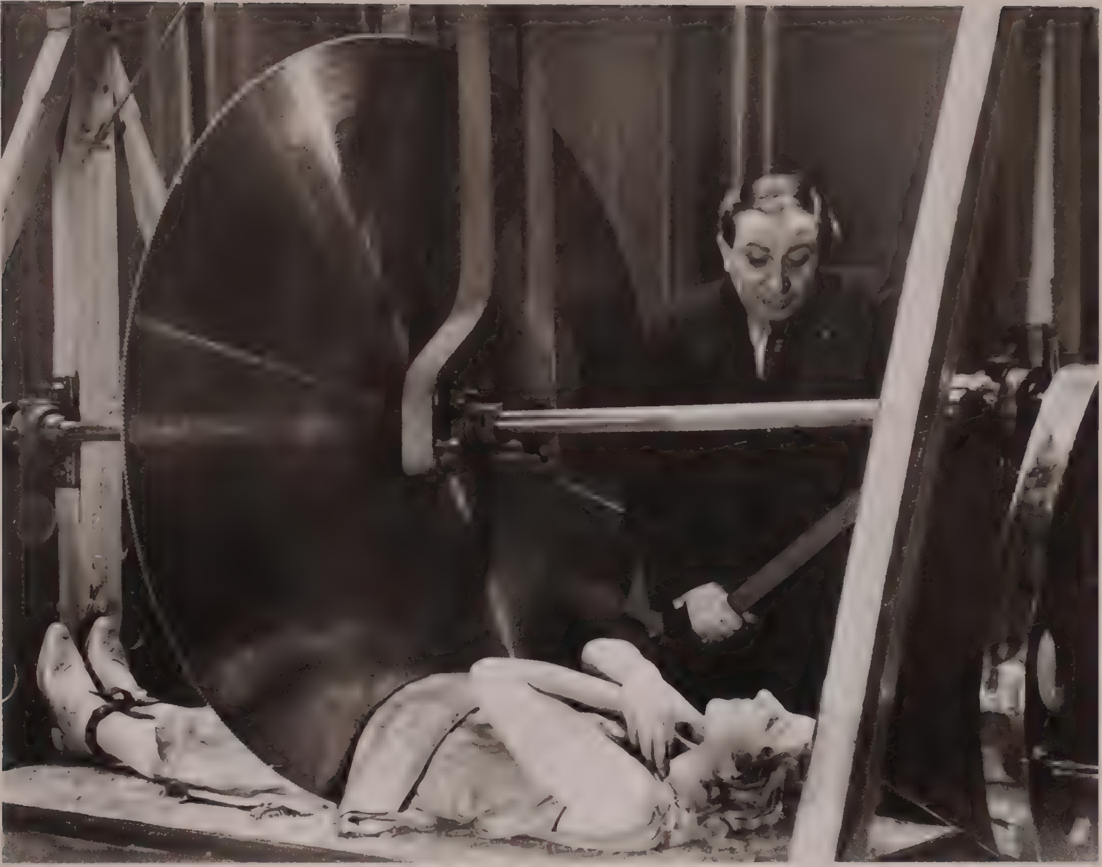
RIGHT: **1926** Charles Carter's elaborate illusion show quickly incorporated the popular sawing-in-half illusion. Like his fellow magicians, Carter used a wooden box for the illusion. But his poster simplified the trick to its essential dramatic elements: the magician, the saw, and the victim.



smash the glass and release Houdini in case of an emergency. After several minutes of breathless anticipation, there was a ripple of movement behind the curtain. The audience cheered as Houdini pulled aside the drapes and stumbled into view—wet, pale, exhausted, and smiling triumphantly. The tank was still locked shut, offering no suggestion of how he managed his escape. The Water Torture Cell seemed absolutely incredible—not merely an escape, but a superhuman feat. Houdini's friend Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, author of the Sherlock Holmes detective novels and a believer in psychic phenomena, was convinced that Houdini was able to dematerialize his body to accomplish these marvels. The 1953 Hollywood film *Houdini* fictionalized his story, showing that he died while attempting the Water Torture Cell. He didn't. He performed it thousands of times, successfully, for more than 13 years.

RIGHT: **ca. 1922** The sawing-in-half illusion became a raging success in vaudeville through the 1920s. By adding this illusion to their shows, many magicians reignited their careers. Barrie was a little-known Canadian mind reader and illusionist who quickly jumped on the bandwagon with his own version of Sawing a Lady in Half.


THE GREAT
BARRIE
Sawing a beautiful woman in halves
in full view of the audience



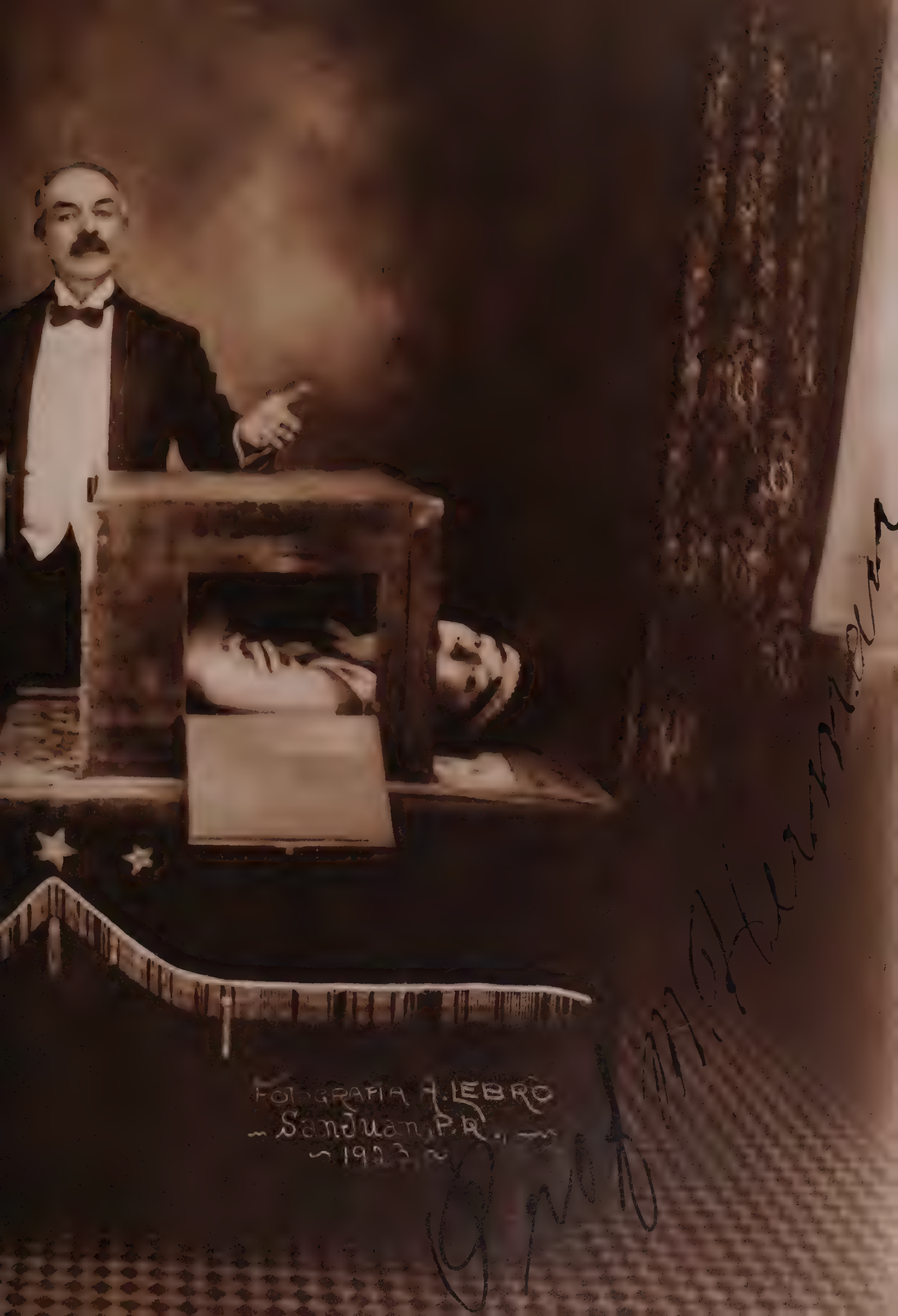
Houdini typically infused his performances with a scale and drama that ensured they would be memorable for his audiences. When he was asked to perform at the New York Hippodrome in 1918—the largest stage in America at that time—Houdini responded with a gargantuan new feat. He led a full-grown elephant into a large cabinet, instructed the assistants to rotate the cabinet, showing each side, and then threw open the curtains so the audience could see the interior. The elephant had disappeared.

Despite Houdini's garnering newspaper headlines for the largest illusion in history, the Vanishing Elephant, Houdini was seldom billed as a magician. To audiences, he was primarily a daredevil, a superman. The public thought of him as an "escape artist." He was also a movie star—Houdini starred in several silent films and serials, which memorialized some of his daring escapes. In October 1926, Houdini suffered an injury that exacerbated an inflamed appendix. He bravely soldiered on with his tour, until he became too weak to continue. Befitting his legend as a mystery man, Houdini died on Halloween in 1926. For years thereafter, séances were held regularly on the anniversary of his death. Friends and fans reasoned that if anyone could "escape" the bonds of death, it would be the Great Houdini. He never returned.

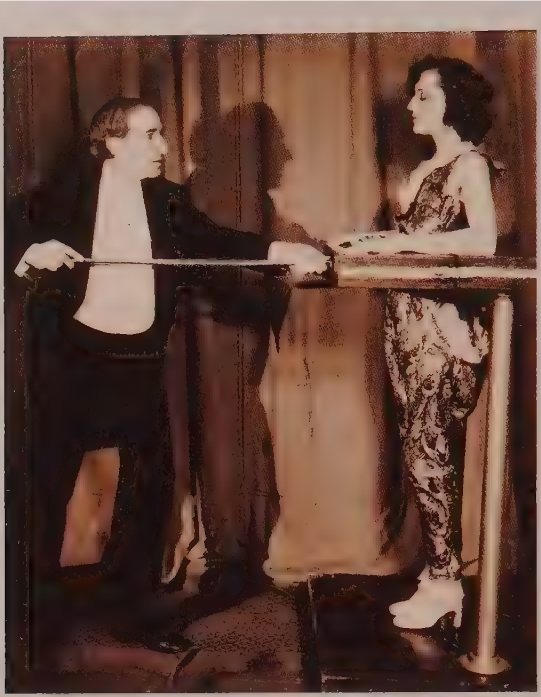
ABOVE: **1931** Horace Goldin, an American illusionist, performed Sawing a Lady in Half in 1921. A decade later, he introduced the Living Miracle. Now there was no box around the woman. The spinning saw lowered ominously until it seemed to rip through her body. When the saw was removed, she stood and took her bow.

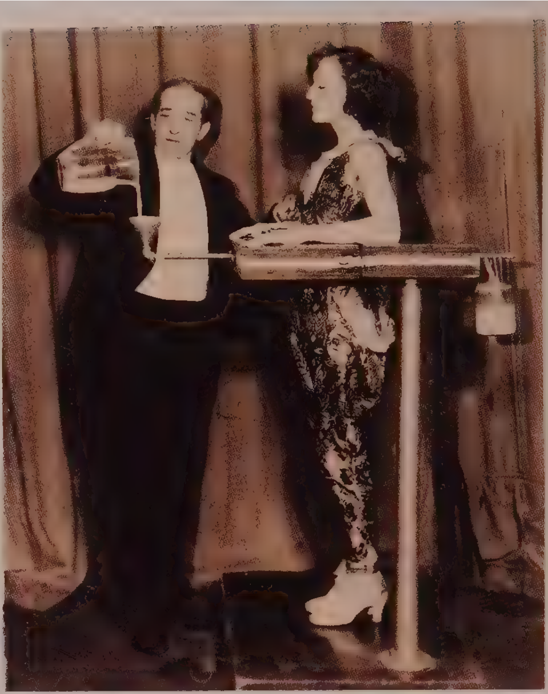
OPPOSITE TOP: **1921** P. T. Selbit's original Sawing Through a Woman was staged using a rough wooden box, sturdy ropes that tied the woman in place, and a menacing lumber saw, evoking the images of early cinema melodramas. In this photo, Selbit poses with his victim, assistant Betty Barker.

PAGES 404–405: **1923** This colorful performer, Professor Herrmann, also known as the Mexican Herrmann, styled himself after Alexander (the Great) Herrmann. His sawing-in-half illusion might have been a lesser effort, involving an awkward piece of apparatus that left plenty of room for trickery. But it was evidently a treat for his small-town audiences.


FOTOGRAFIA A. LEBRO
San Juan, P.R.
1923

Prof M. Herrera





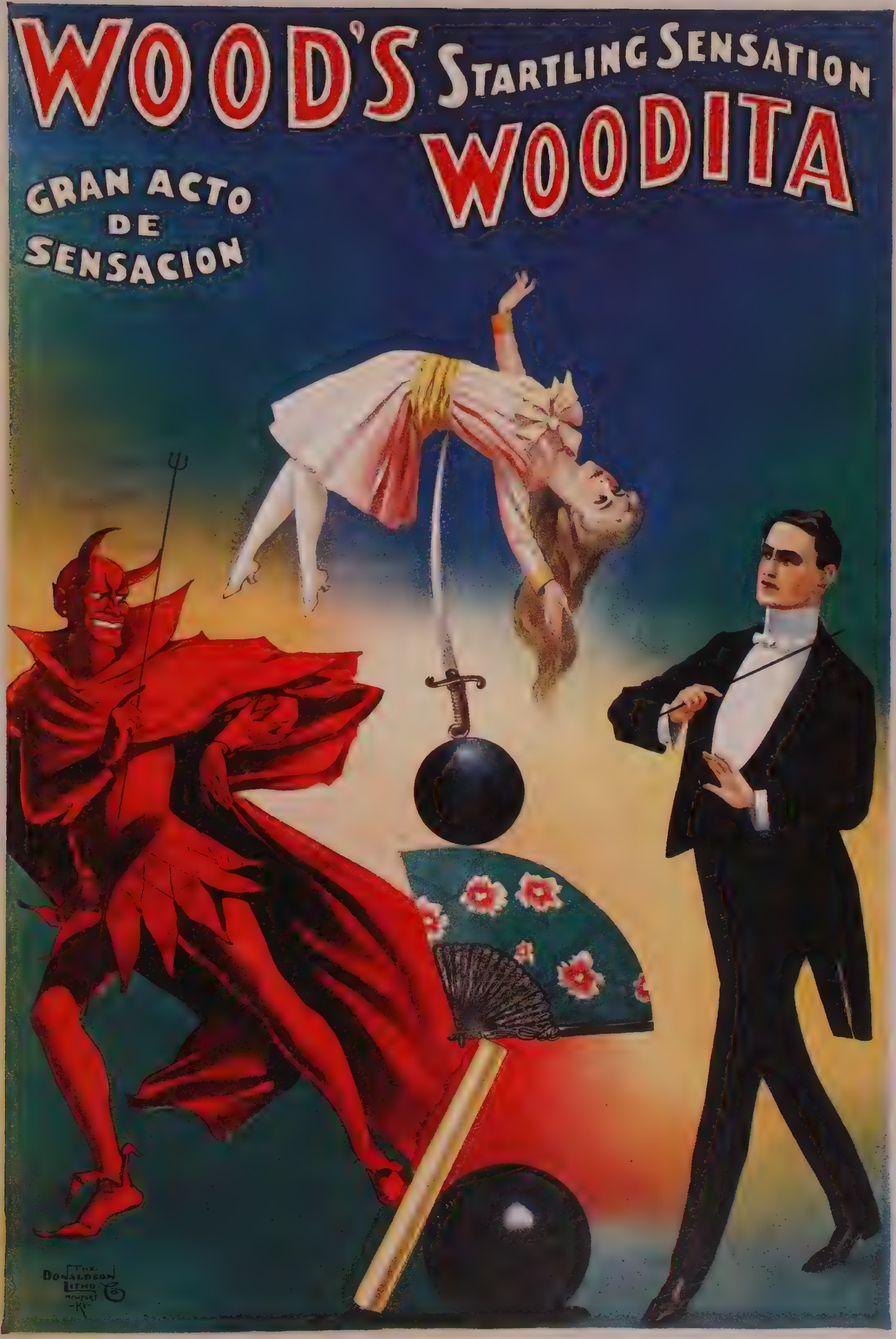
ABOVE AND BELOW: **ca. 1932** Piercing a Woman, a simpler version of the torture illusions, was invented by Edward Massey for magician Howard Thurston. Thurston pushed a long steel pipe through an assistant's body until it emerged from the wooden stocks that surrounded her. He then poured milk into one end of the steel pipe, and the milk emerged from the opposite end.

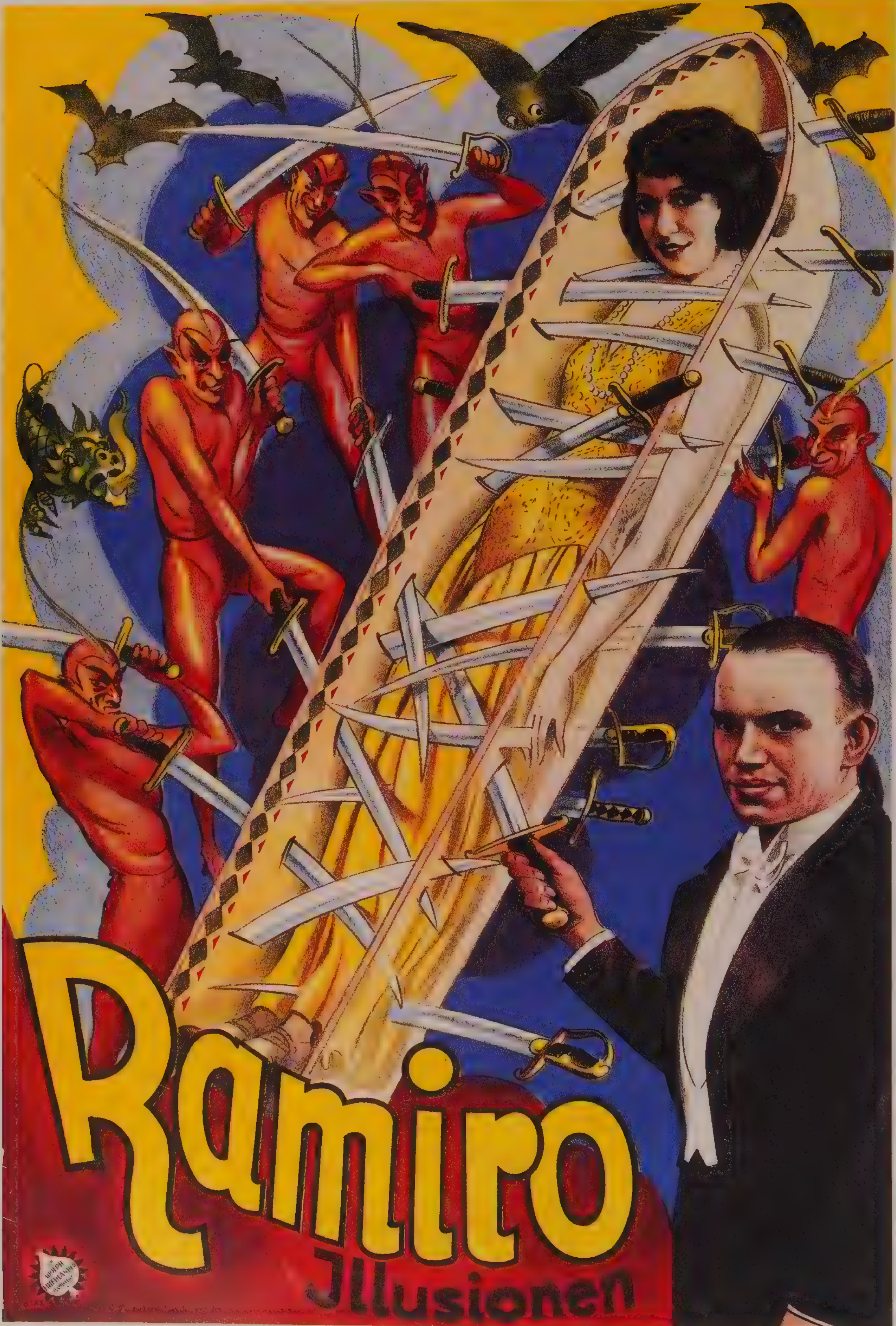
OPPOSITE: **ca. 1908** While there are no written accounts of Wood's Woodita illusion, presumably his presentation was based on an ancient East Indian feat of balancing a person on the tip of a sword. Wood portrayed the feat as a dangerous balancing act. The poster artist added the precarious collection of objects, like a cannonball and a paper fan, to enhance the illusion.

A Careful Mix of Danger & Suspense

Other magicians, contemporaries of Houdini, were exploring very different ways to keep the crowds on the edges of their seats. The formula was a careful mixture of danger and suspense. American magicians Howard Thurston, Horace Goldin, and Frederick Bancroft, and Belgian Servais Le Roy thrilled their audiences by incorporating wild animals into their stage performances. Thurston's illusion began by enclosing a woman in a cabinet and obscuring her behind a drapery. When the fabric was pulled away, the woman was gone, and the audience was staring at a live roaring lion in a metal cage. The woman reappeared on the other side of the stage, seated in a giant bird cage (p. 416). But the greatest of these animal acts was the Lion's Bride, an incredible illusion incorporated into a melodramatic play. It was the masterpiece of the Great Lafayette.

Lafayette was born Sigmund Neuberger in Munich, Germany, in 1871, and immigrated to America in 1886. He was an artist and a showman to his fingertips, a magician, pantomime performer, archer, impersonator, and quick change artist. In the Lion's Bride, the setting was an exotic Middle Eastern fantasy. A real lion paced in its cage in the middle of the stage, snarling and roaring through

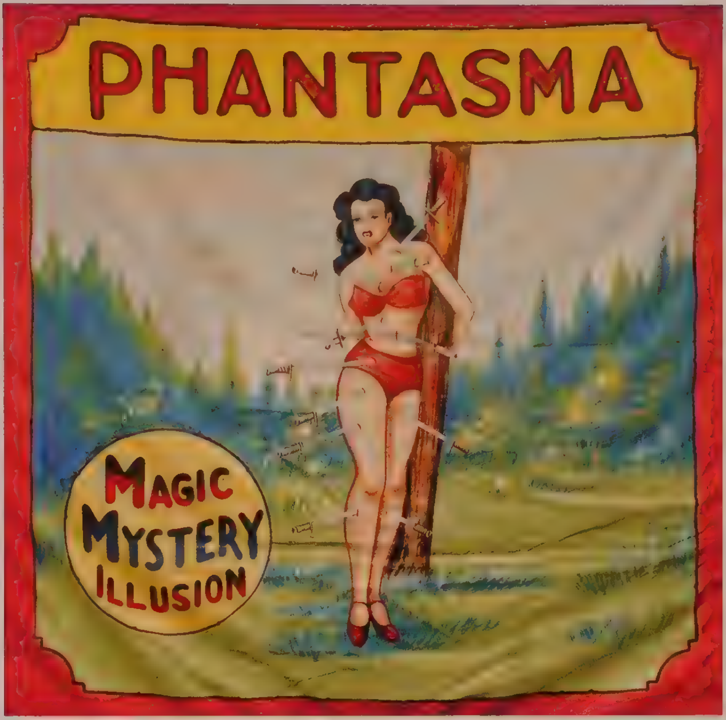

WOOD'S
STARTLING SENSATION
WOODITA
GRAN ACTO
DE
SENSACION
THE DONALDSON LITHO CO
NEWPORT
KY



Ramiro
Jllusionen

RIGHT: **ca. 1950** Sideshow banners, like magic posters, were designed to lure audiences inside the tent. Often the image on the banner had little similarity to what viewers were about to see. This sideshow banner promoted a sword-box illusion by using an incredible image.

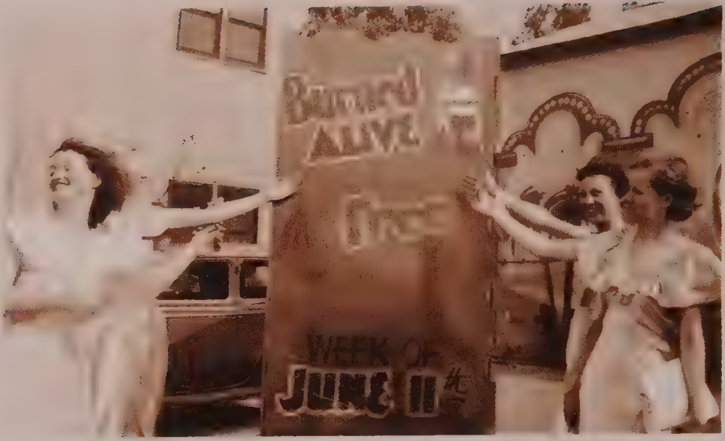
OPPOSITE: **1932** Don Ramiro was a Spanish magician who toured Germany in the 1920s and '30s. A coffin-shaped cabinet pierced by swords was a popular effect for many magicians. Here the poster artist showed the beautiful victim trapped inside, and added the imaginary devils to accentuate the torture.



the scene. A princess was brought to the stage. She had refused to join the Pasha's harem and was now sentenced to death. Lafayette, playing the hero, arrived onstage, galloping into view on a stallion. He released the princess, donning her robes and veil, to take her place at the execution. When the Pasha's men arrived, Lafayette—as the princess—was tossed into the cage with the lion. The animal charged and pounced on the victim. The audience involuntarily screamed—the scene had turned into savage murder. And then, miraculously, the lion paused, rearing up and tossing away the lion skin to reveal Lafayette in disguise! The magician stepped forward as the audience roared its approval.

Some magicians relied on weapons or explosions to add a sense of danger. Horace Goldin, a popular American illusionist of the early 1900s, started a trend with an oversize cannon. He loaded a female assistant into the cannon and pointed it over the audience's head, aiming at a large trunk suspended from the dome of the theater. The cannon was fired; it exploded and belched smoke. Goldin opened the back of the cannon and peered through it at the audience. The woman had disappeared. The trunk was quickly lowered to the stage. Inside was found a smaller trunk, and this was opened to find an even smaller one. When this third trunk was finally opened, the woman was discovered, tucked safely inside.

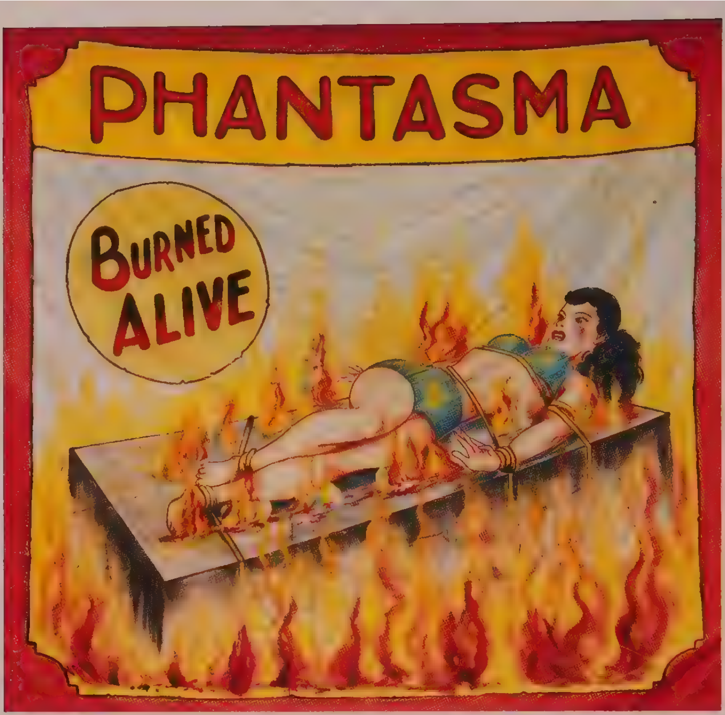
The Great Leon, an American vaudeville star, went one step further in 1924, with his Death Ray Gun, an incredible combination of science-fiction fantasy and stage conjuring (p. 422). "Just as a radio wave will penetrate the solid walls of a closed and sealed room, so will any object shot from this gun penetrate another solid substance," Leon told his expectant audience. A large, seamless sheet of steel, four by seven feet, was examined by the audience. It was placed vertically, in an upright stand, like a wall of armor. Leon then showed a cannon, just large enough to hold a person in its barrel. One of his assistants donned a crash helmet and was slipped inside of a large brass tube that looked like an oversize bullet shell. The human bullet was placed into the barrel, and the cannon was rolled into position so that its mouth touched the surface of the steel. Leon gave a dramatic countdown. "Three, two, one!" The cannon blasted the projectile through the steel, sending it hurtling through the air and into a net stretched across the stage. But amazingly, the sheet of steel was still intact—without even a scratch. The assistant emerged from the metal shell and scrambled to her feet to take a bow. Despite the hair-raising ordeal, she was unharmed.



ABOVE AND BELOW: **ca. 1950** Lester Lake, who worked under the name Marvelo, offered his Burned Alive stunt as a feat of superhuman resistance. This advertisement, above, promoted his fairground stunt. There was a long tradition of fire resisters, or human salamanders, who could pick up hot coals, eat fire, or survive in a heated oven. In Lake's version, he was enclosed inside a coffin and placed on a flaming pyre. When the flames subsided, he emerged from the coffin, unharmed. Below, Lake stands next to the coffin he used for the feat.

OPPOSITE: **ca. 1950** Audiences watched as the magician was enclosed in the coffin and positioned on a bonfire. The roaring fire was a sensation that was only suitable for an open field; it never could have been contained on a stage. As it burned, it naturally attracted hundreds of stunned spectators.

Will Goldston, a magic dealer and writer during the early years of the 1900s, suggested that magic had been coarsened by the gradual emphasis on sensations. "Magic has suffered a good deal," he wrote. "The Great War [World War I] turned the world, and people's ideas, topsy-turvy. The demand in entertainment, after the war, was for noise and excitement." Perhaps Goldston was right, and audiences had been desensitized by the war's violence, requiring white-knuckle horrors to make them sit up and take notice. In 1920, just after World War I, the Grand Guignol, the famous French theater of horror and bloodshed, had exported its specialties to an English-speaking troupe in London. Founded in the 1890s, the Grand Guignol offered an evening of short plays, many deliberately violent and gruesome, using stage trickery to simulate beheadings, torture, and dismemberment. Critics scorned the productions, but audiences were continually lured by the horror. Spectators in Paris often left the auditorium to hyperventilate in the nearby alley. By the end of 1920, a British magician named P. T. Selbit answered the call for still more visceral thrills in the magic world. In London, he premiered a new sensation, Sawing Through a Woman, that would become the single most copied magic act of the 20th century (p. 400).



LEFT: **ca. 1950** Servais Le Roy, a creative Belgian magician, developed a cremation illusion that became a favorite with sideshow performers. A woman was slid into a casket, and its interior was lit with a torch. When the flames subsided, the casket was opened, revealing a burning skeleton.

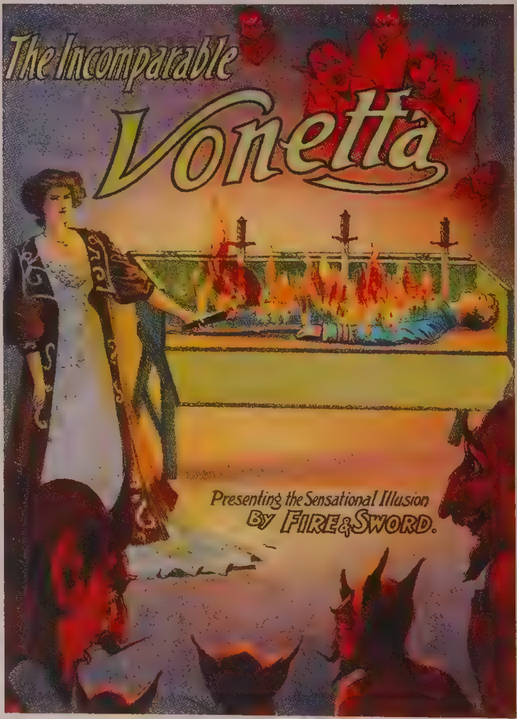
OPPOSITE: **1911** Alexander Fredrik toured the United States in the early years of the 20th century. In 1911 he produced a lavish new show, complete with beautiful posters, that opened in Michigan. The Lady and Lion illusion depicted here proved too extravagant for his tour. There is no record that Fredrik ever presented it.

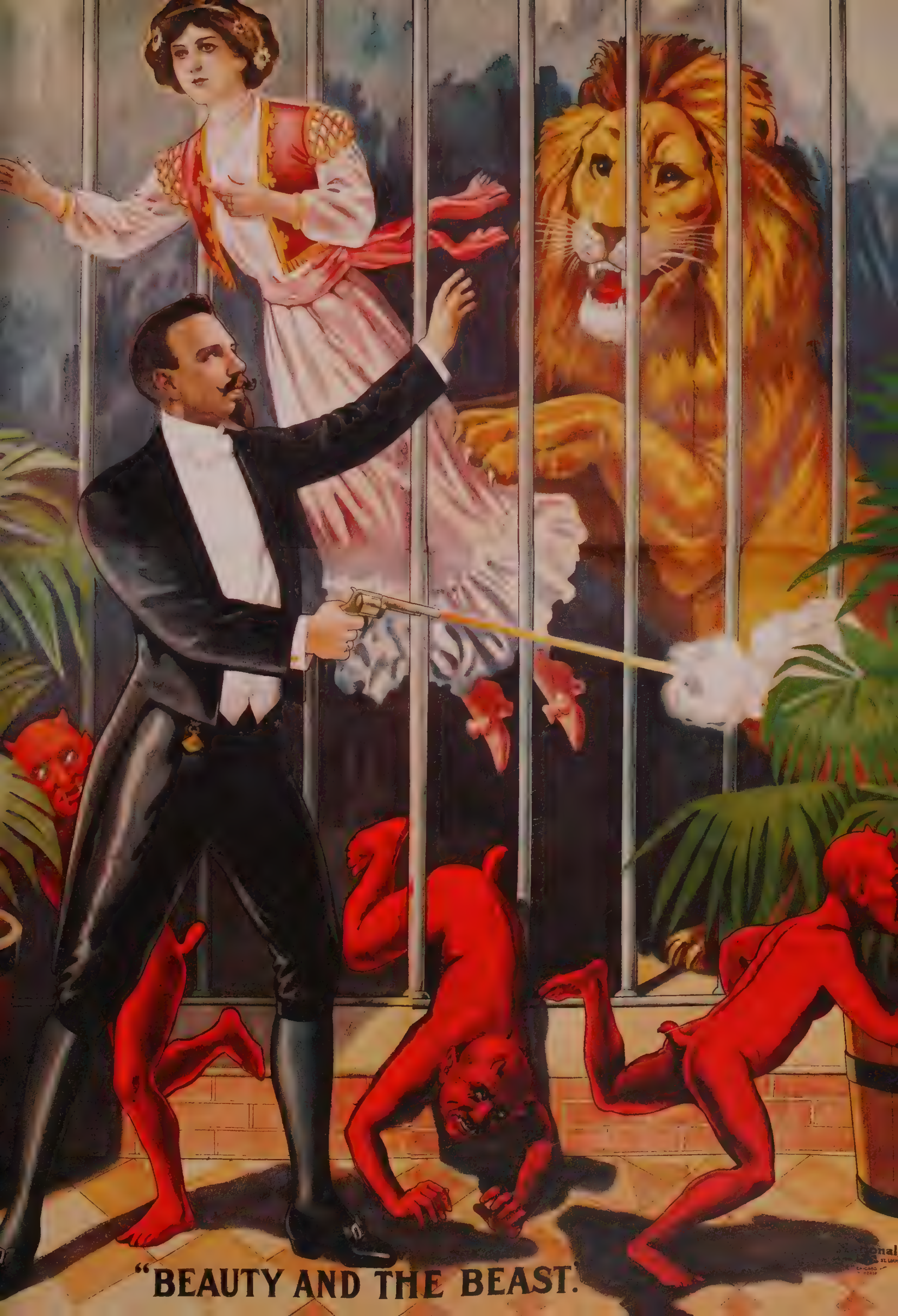
BELOW: **ca. 1914** Vonetta, one of very few female magicians, performed in British music halls in the early 20th century. Her act combined dancing, sleight of hand, and a series of quick changes from one elaborate costume to another. Even female magicians were expected to flirt with danger; here Vonetta turns the tables, cremating and impaling a male assistant.

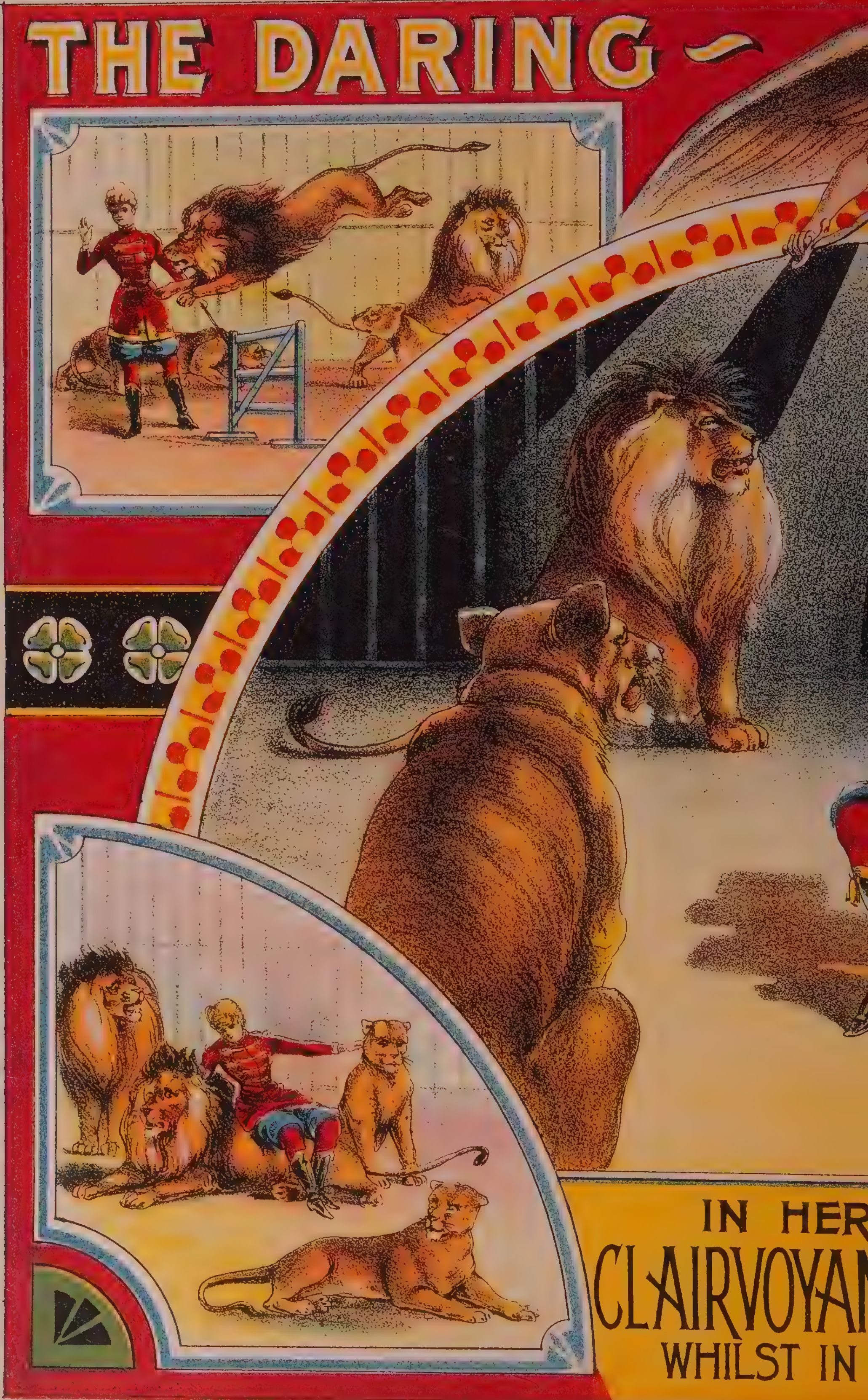
Sawing a Lady in Half: Sensation of the Century

Selbit's illusion was the perfect product of its times, as audiences were thrilling to the cliché of the imperiled woman, a popular element in silent films and stage melodramas. A woman was securely roped inside a wooden packing box as volunteers from the audience held the ropes taut and supervised the action. Selbit picked up a menacing-looking crosscut saw and dramatically sawed through the box. As the saw ripped through the wood and tumbled onto the stage below, he anxiously peered inside the box. When the lid was thrown open, his assistant was completely unharmed.

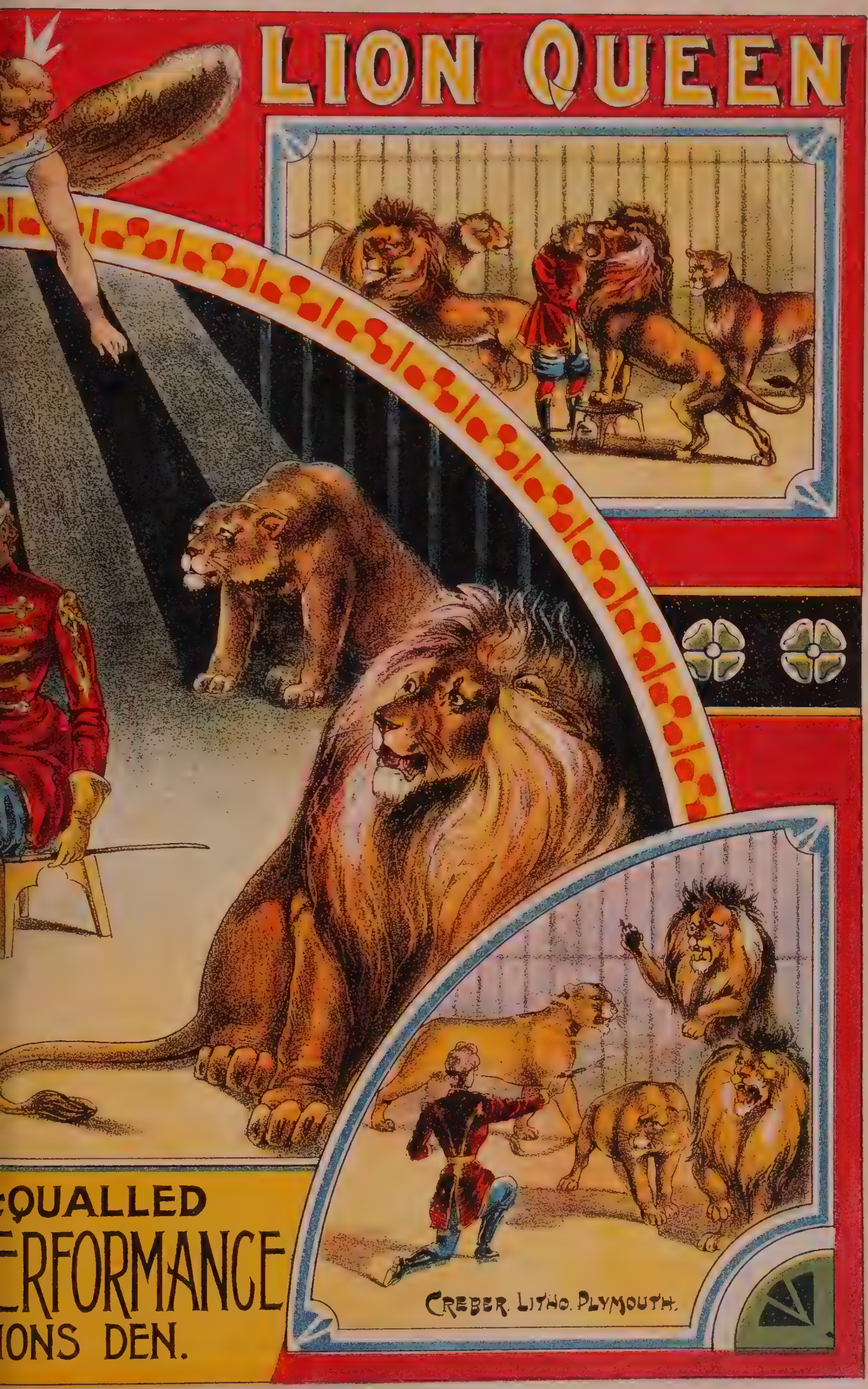
The following spring, Horace Goldin was searching for a new attraction for American audiences and copied Selbit's idea. Goldin's version, Sawing a Lady in Half, incorporated a shorter box, so the woman's head protruded from one end and her feet from the other (p. 457). The box was sawed down the middle, and the two box halves, containing the woman, were slid apart. The illusion became such a sensation that magicians could barely keep up with the demand. Goldin franchised five magicians to present his version in the Keith Orpheum circuit of vaudeville theaters across America. Selbit arrived later that year and franchised seven magicians to perform his illusions in the Shubert




"BEAUTY AND THE BEAST."
onal
St. Louis
Chicago


THE DARING –
IN HER
CLAIRVOYAN
WHILST IN

LION QUEEN

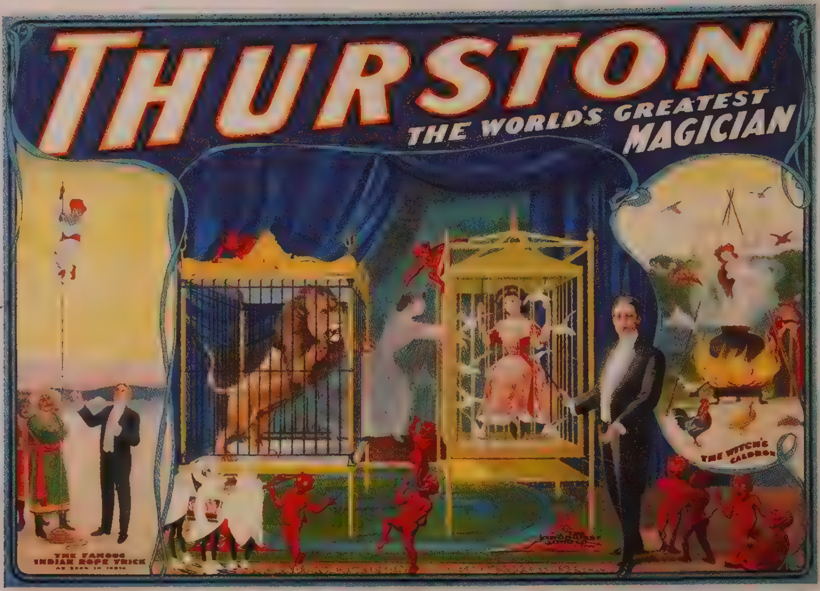


QUALLED

ERFORMANCE

IONS DEN.

CREBER. LITHO. PLYMOUTH.


THURSTON
THE WORLD'S GREATEST MAGICIAN
THE FAMOUS INDIAN ROPE TRICK AS SEEN IN INDIA
THE WITCH'S CALDRON

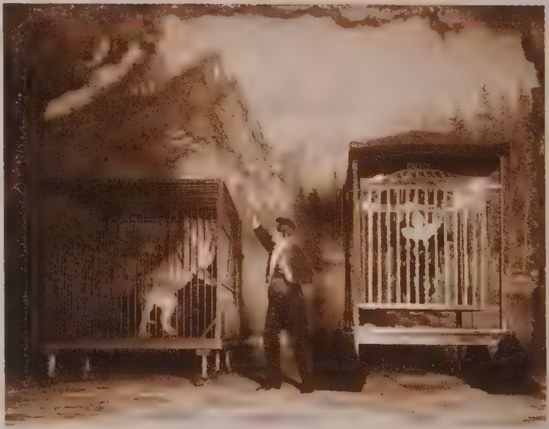
PAGES 414–415: **ca. 1910** As magicians incorporated the thrills of traditional circus acts, it's not surprising that some circus performers added magic to their acts. Princess Delawarr performed in British circuses as a lion tamer and mind reader. As this poster illustrates, her clairvoyant skills seemed to accentuate her control over the animals.

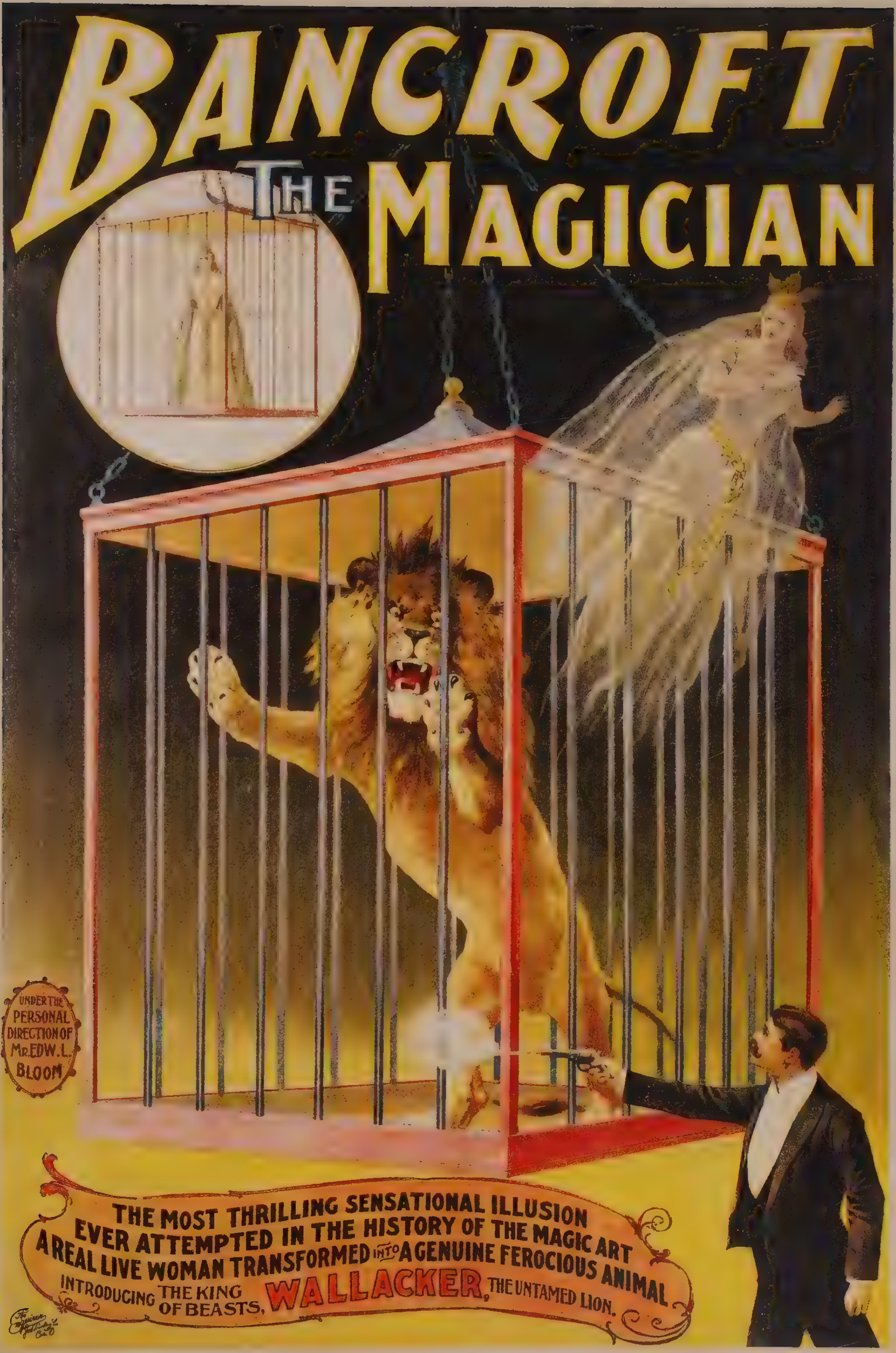
ABOVE AND BELOW: **1909** The Lady and Lion illusion is shown in the lithographic advertisement above, and in a rare photograph from Howard Thurston's show, below. The lady disappeared from one cabinet and appeared in another. When the first cabinet was opened, it had been transformed into a steel cage containing a snarling lion.

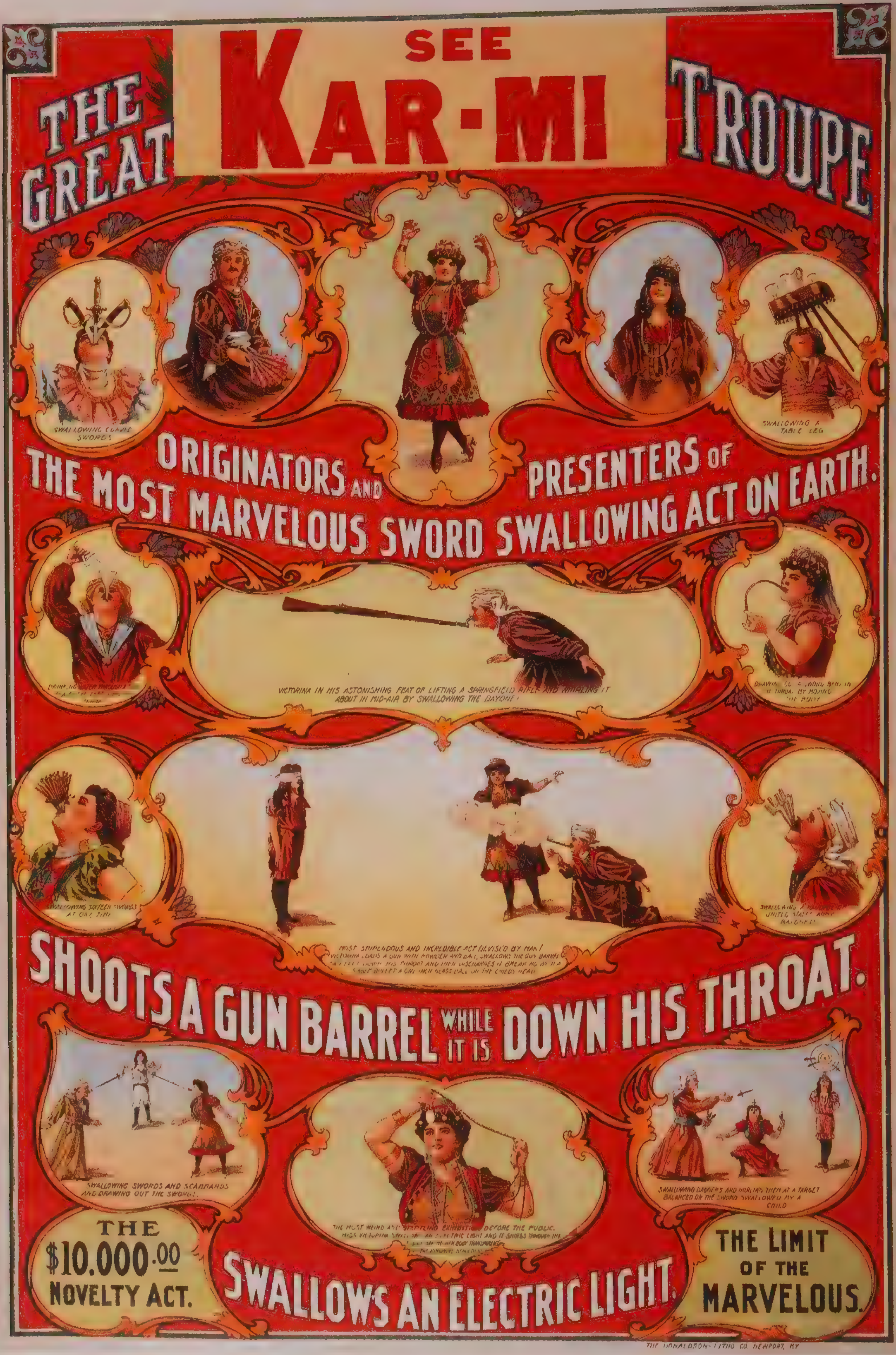
circuit. For several years, the trick was the subject of patents, lawsuits, and injunctions. Goldin went on to perform an improved variation, in which the woman was no longer covered with a box, but reclined, face up, on a table, beneath a whirling 36-inch circular saw (p. 403). The illusion was now horrific to the extreme, a combination of magic and a melodramatic cliff-hanger. Selbit continued the Grand Guignol–like success, presenting a series of mock-torture illusions through the 1920s: Stretching a Lady, Crushing a Lady, and Subduing a Lady with Bayonets.

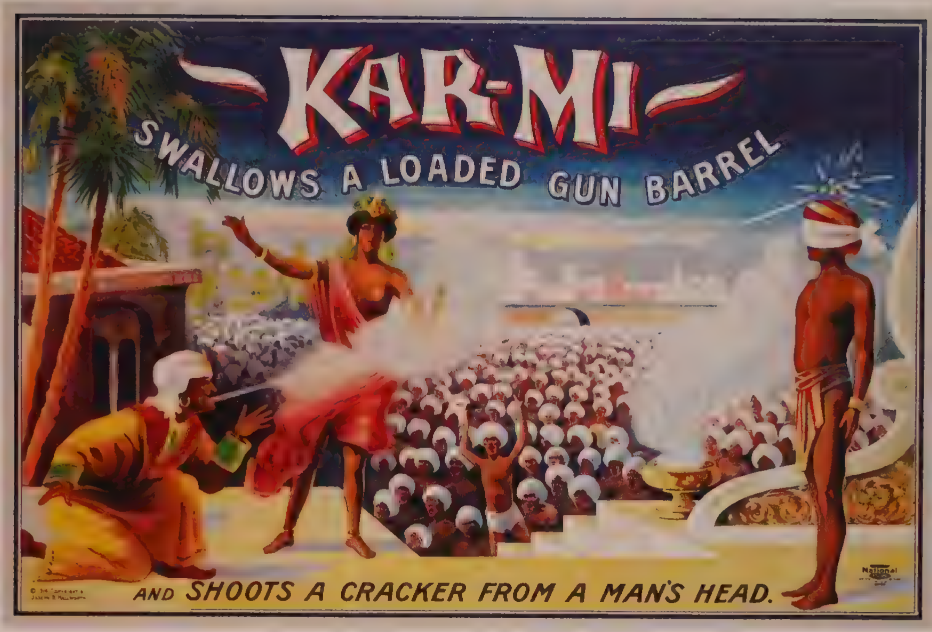
Were these illusions really dangerous? Yes and no. They were designed to look life threatening, but the sharp blades were usually separated from the women, the explosions were often blanks, and the wild animals were safely contained within deceptive apparatus. Houdini took very few chances with his escapes; they were planned carefully and rehearsed meticulously. But there were always elements of danger. Houdini suffered a lifetime of bruises and broken bones from his escapes, and one of his offstage experiments—an attempt to survive being buried alive—left him sufficiently frightened to abandon any future attempts. Ironically, it was often the sheer size or complexity of the productions that became hazardous. The Great Lafayette lost his life in a theater fire in

OPPOSITE: **ca. 1897** Frederick Bancroft, born Frederick Bronson, was a dentist and real-estate speculator from St. Paul, Minnesota. Determined to become a great magician, he spent lavishly on his equipment and stage set. Unfortunately, Bancroft died of typhoid fever in 1897, before his show, or the ambitious lion illusion, was complete.




BANCROFT
THE MAGICIAN
UNDER THE PERSONAL DIRECTION OF Mr. EDW. L. BLOOM
THE MOST THRILLING SENSATIONAL ILLUSION
EVER ATTEMPTED IN THE HISTORY OF THE MAGIC ART
A REAL LIVE WOMAN TRANSFORMED INTO A GENUINE FEROCIOUS ANIMAL
INTRODUCING THE KING OF BEASTS, WALLACKER, THE UNTAMED LION.
The Enquirer Job Printing Co.


SEE
THE GREAT KAR-MI TROUPE
SWALLOWING CURVED SWORDS
SWALLOWING A TABLE LEG
ORIGINATORS AND PRESENTERS OF
THE MOST MARVELOUS SWORD SWALLOWING ACT ON EARTH.
VICTORINA IN HIS ASTONISHING FEAT OF LIFTING A SPRINGFIELD RIFLE AND WHIRLING IT ABOUT IN MID-AIR BY SWALLOWING THE BAYONET
SWALLOWING SIXTEEN SWORDS AT ONE TIME
MOST STUPENDOUS AND INCREDIBLE ACT DEVISED BY MAN!
SHOOTS A GUN BARREL WHILE IT IS DOWN HIS THROAT.
SWALLOWING SWORDS AND SCABBARDS AND DRAWING OUT THE SWORDS.
SWALLOWING DAGGERS AND HURLING THEM AT A TARGET BALANCED ON THE SWORD SWALLOWED BY A CHILD
THE MOST WEIRD AND STARTLING EXHIBITION BEFORE THE PUBLIC.
THE $10.000.00 NOVELTY ACT.
SWALLOWS AN ELECTRIC LIGHT.
THE LIMIT OF THE MARVELOUS.
THE DONALDSON LITHO CO. NEWPORT, KY


KAR-MI
SWALLOWS A LOADED GUN BARREL
AND SHOOTS A CRACKER FROM A MAN'S HEAD.
National

ABOVE: **1914** The finale of Kar-Mi's act was this unique William Tell-style challenge. Kar-Mi swallowed the barrel of a special rifle without a stock. With the rifle projecting from his mouth, he bent his body and fired the gun, shooting a cracker off his son's head.

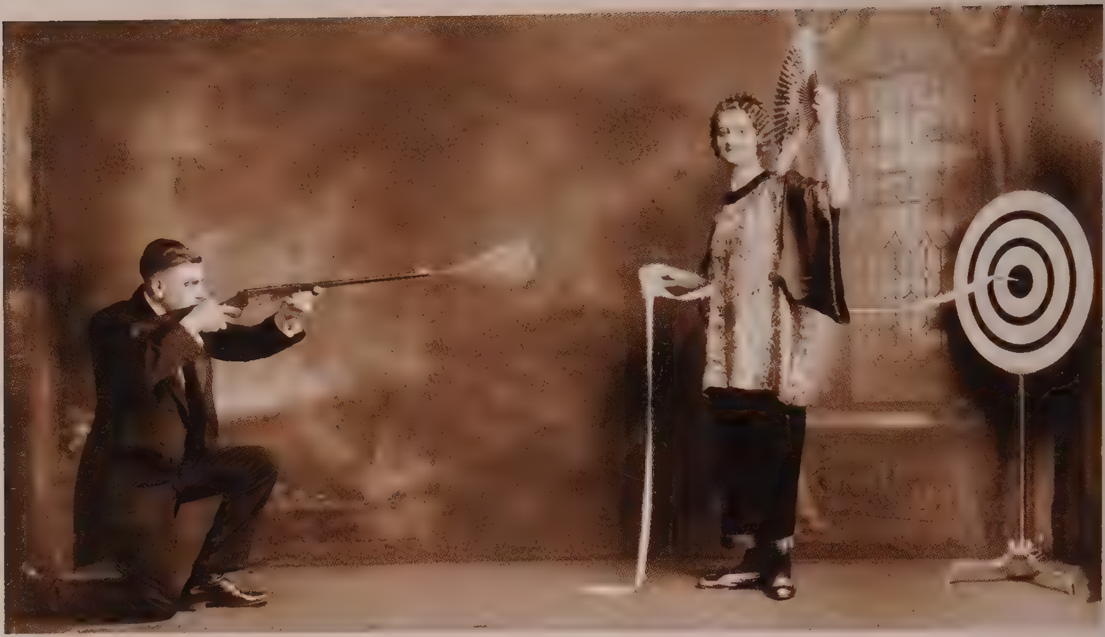
Edinburgh, Scotland, on May 9, 1911. On that night, just as the Lion's Bride was concluding, an Oriental lantern hanging on the stage caught fire, and the flames quickly spread to the elaborate swags of drapery that filled the stage. The audience and many of the performers safely escaped the theater, including Lafayette. But as the magician nervously paced the alley behind the theater, watching the flames rise, he realized that Prince, his lion, and Arizona, his horse, were still trapped inside. He dashed in through the stage door, but never emerged. His remains were discovered days later. He'd become trapped when the stage collapsed from the inferno. Ironically, it wasn't the lion that provided the danger, but the elements of Lafayette's lavish spectacle.

OPPOSITE: **ca. 1914** Joseph B. Hallworth was a Massachusetts magician who performed in an Oriental costume and billed himself as Kar-Mi. The Kar-Mi family performed stage illusions, but this elaborate poster concentrated on their daring sword-swallowing and trick-shooting routines. The family was originally billed as the Victorina Troupe; the unsightly paper label on this poster covers the name Victorina.

A Fatal Tragedy Onstage

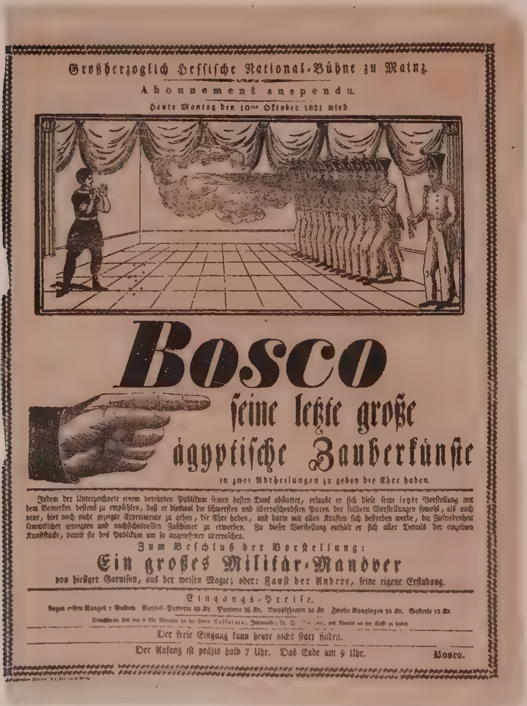
One of magic's greatest stars, Chung Ling Soo, died in a famous tragedy that was a dark chapter in magic, an unfortunate mixture of trickery, explosives, and daring. Chung Ling Soo was a renowned British music-hall artist at the start of the 20th century. The public never knew that he was not Chinese but an American magician named William Ellsworth Robinson, born in 1862. Robinson never set foot in China, but found his calling by imitating genuine Chinese magic that he had seen in American vaudeville. Robinson shaved his head, dressed in Chinese robes, and never spoke onstage. As an Occidental's fantasy of an Oriental act, Chung Ling Soo's concoction was even more extravagant than real Chinese magic. Year after year, audiences came to see his artistic, exotic marvels.

In 1904, he introduced his own version of the classic Bullet Catching Trick, which dates from the 1600s. Soo presented it as Condemned to Death by the Boxers, referencing a recent uprising in China that had made headlines, and he surrounded it with Oriental pageantry (pp. 478–479). Soo was marched onto the stage as if led to an execution. Two lead bullets were shown to the audience, and two spectators marked them by scratching lines or initials into the slugs. These were brought to



ABOVE: **ca. 1925** An unknown stage magician performs Shooting Through a Woman. This effect was a faster and more colorful variation on the traditional Bullet Catching Trick. An arrow and attached ribbon were loaded into a rifle and fired at an assistant, apparently penetrating her body.

BELOW: **1831** The Bullet Catching Trick may date from the late 17th century; it was popularized a century later by the showman Philip Astley. This bill advertises the Italian magician Bartolomeo Bosco during his tour of Germany. The engraving pictures him facing a dozen soldiers.



Großherzoglich Heſſiſche National-Bühne zu Mainz.

Abonnement suspendu.

Heute Montag den 10ten Oktober 1831 wird

Bosco

ſeine letzte große ägyptiſche Zauberkünſte

in zwei Abtheilungen zu geben die Ehre haben.

Indem der Unterzeichnete einem verehrten Publikum ſeinen beſten Dank abſtattet, erlaubt er ſich dieſe ſeine letzte Vorſtellung mit dem Bemerken beſtens zu empfehlen, daß er diesmal die ſchwerſten und überraſchendſten Piecen der frühern Vorſtellungen ſowohl, als auch neue, hier noch nicht gezeigte Experimente zu geben, die Ehre haben, und darin mit allen Kräften ſich beſtreben werde, die Zufriedenheit ſämmtlicher geneigten und nachſichtsvollen Zuſchauer zu erwerben. Zu dieſer Vorſtellung enthält er ſich aller Details der einzelnen Kunſtſtücke, damit ſie das Publikum um ſo angenehmer überraſchen.

Zum Beſchluß der Vorſtellung:

Ein großes Militär-Manöver

von hieſiger Garniſon, aus der weiſen Magie; oder: Fauſt der Andere, ſeine eigene Erfindung.

Eingangs-Preiſe.

Logen erſten Ranges 1 Gulden. Rondel-Parterre 48 Kr. Parterre 36 Kr. Amphitheater 30 Kr. Zweite Ranglogen 24 Kr. Gallerie 12 Kr.

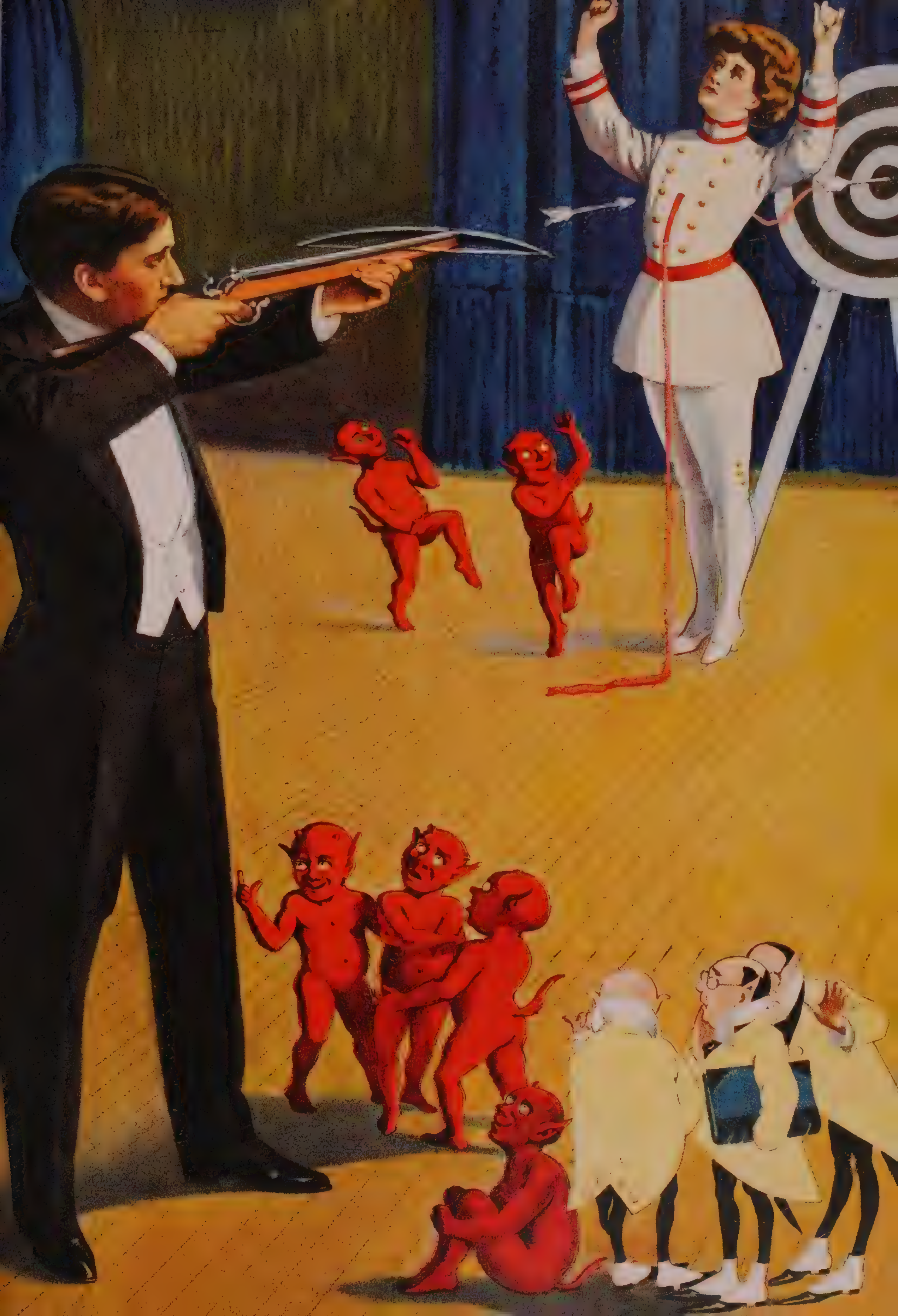
[illegible] Abends an der Kaſſe zu haben

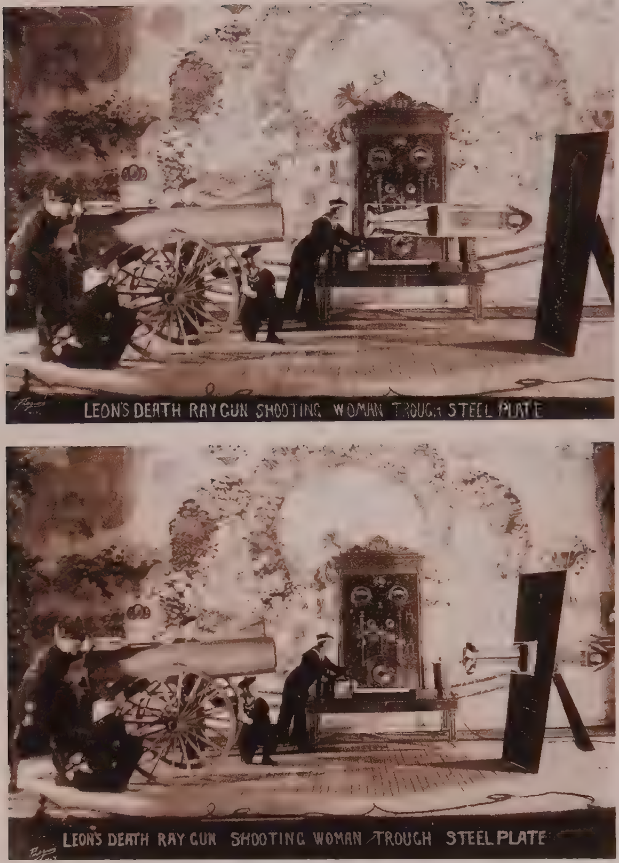
Der freie Eingang kann heute nicht ſtatt finden.

Der Anfang iſt präzis halb 7 Uhr. Das Ende um 9 Uhr. Bosco.

one side of the stage and dramatically loaded into two old-fashioned rifles, along with a quantity of black powder and cotton wadding. Meanwhile, Soo took his position on the opposite side of the stage, holding a dish in front of his chest. His assistants, dressed as Chinese soldiers, shouldered the rifles, took careful aim, and fired. The guns exploded, Soo staggered, as if he'd been struck. As he twisted the plate horizontally, between his hands, the audience realized that they heard the bullets spinning against the porcelain dish. He stepped forward, obviously unharmed, and offered the bullets for examination. The spectators' marks were still visible.

OPPOSITE: **1910** Howard Thurston's illusion the Piercing Arrow was based on Chung Ling Soo's original effect, called the Living Target. Thurston's scripted lines for his routine suggested a magical mistake. The assistant first entered with an apple. Thurston told her: "Hold the apple a little higher. No, no, not in front of you. Don't do it!"



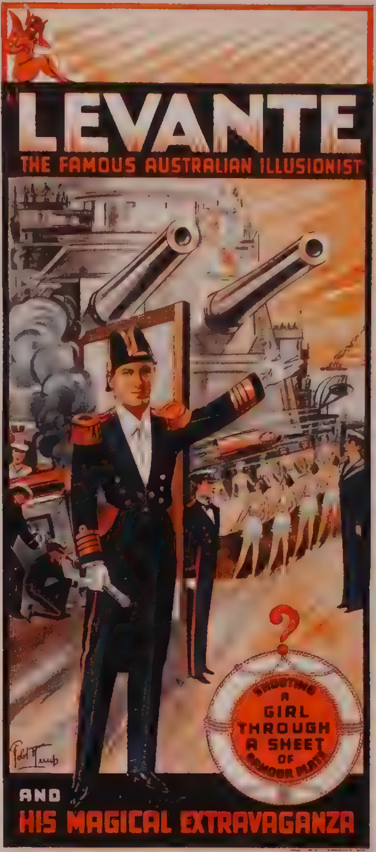

LEON'S DEATH RAY GUN SHOOTING WOMAN TROUGH STEEL PLATE
LEON'S DEATH RAY GUN SHOOTING WOMAN TROUGH STEEL PLATE

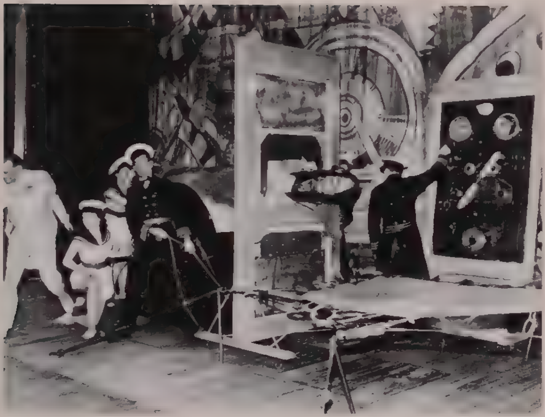
LEFT: **1922** The Great Leon presented the Death Ray Gun, in which a woman wearing a metal costume was fired from a cannon through a solid sheet of steel. When she emerged on the other side, both the woman and the steel were intact. Leon's publicity photos exaggerated the effect. Actually, the sheet of metal was in a much larger frame, and it was positioned against the mouth of the cannon.

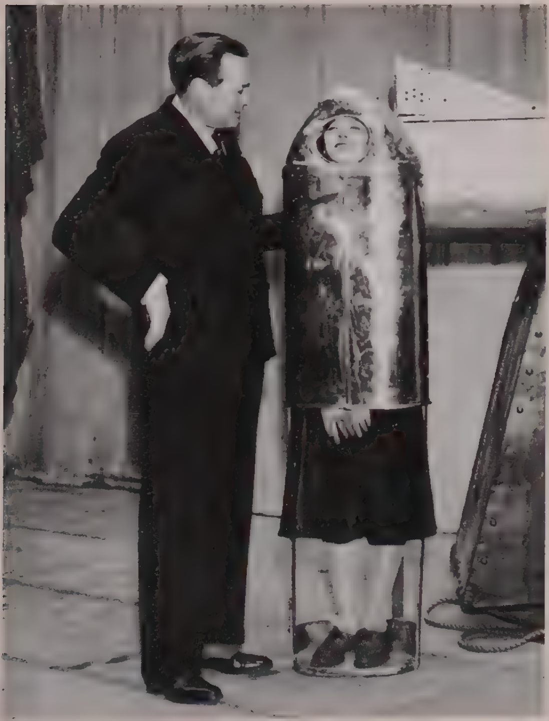
For 14 years, Chung Ling Soo used Condemned to Death by the Boxers as a special feature, or to attract crowds and boost ticket sales at the theater. On March 23, 1918, he included it in his program at the Wood Green Empire theater, just north of London. At the second show that night, as the rifles were fired, stagehands noticed that the sound from the shots was extra loud. The audience watched as Soo dropped the plate to the stage, let out a shout, and fell to the floor. "Oh my god, something's happened. Lower the curtain!" They were the only words he ever spoke from the stage, in perfect English. He was rushed to the hospital but died the next morning, the victim of massive wounds from one of the bullets, which passed through his body and slammed against the brick wall of the theater. It was only after his death that his real identity was explained to the public and his gun trick was analyzed by the coroner. In fact, Soo had designed a trick rifle to fire a blank charge while concealing the bullet in a secret compartment. Over the years, the metal parts of one of his trick rifles had slowly worn away, so that the gunpowder had managed to trickle from one compartment to the other. On the fateful night, the powder ignited in both compartments, and Soo was pierced by a real bullet. The tragedy was officially ruled "death by misadventure." Audiences believed that they had been watching a bold Chinese wizard perform a death-defying trick. They never realized that Chung Ling Soo had been playing a long, unwitting game of Russian roulette with his rifles.

The advertising, headlines, and inevitable accidents only whetted the appetites of the public. It took ever-increasing marvels to lure them back into the theater. "I always have on my mind the thought that next year I must do something greater, something more wonderful," Houdini once admitted. By the 1920s, a true master of magic was expected not only to display his powers but to flaunt them, by including a reckless dose of danger, challenging death.

RIGHT: **1937** To capitalize on the Death Ray Gun's dangerous apparatus, Les Levante gave the illusion an elaborate military setting. This seven-foot-tall poster emphasizes the gigantic cannons of a warship. It promises dangerous thrills and teases audiences with his assistant's daredevil performance.

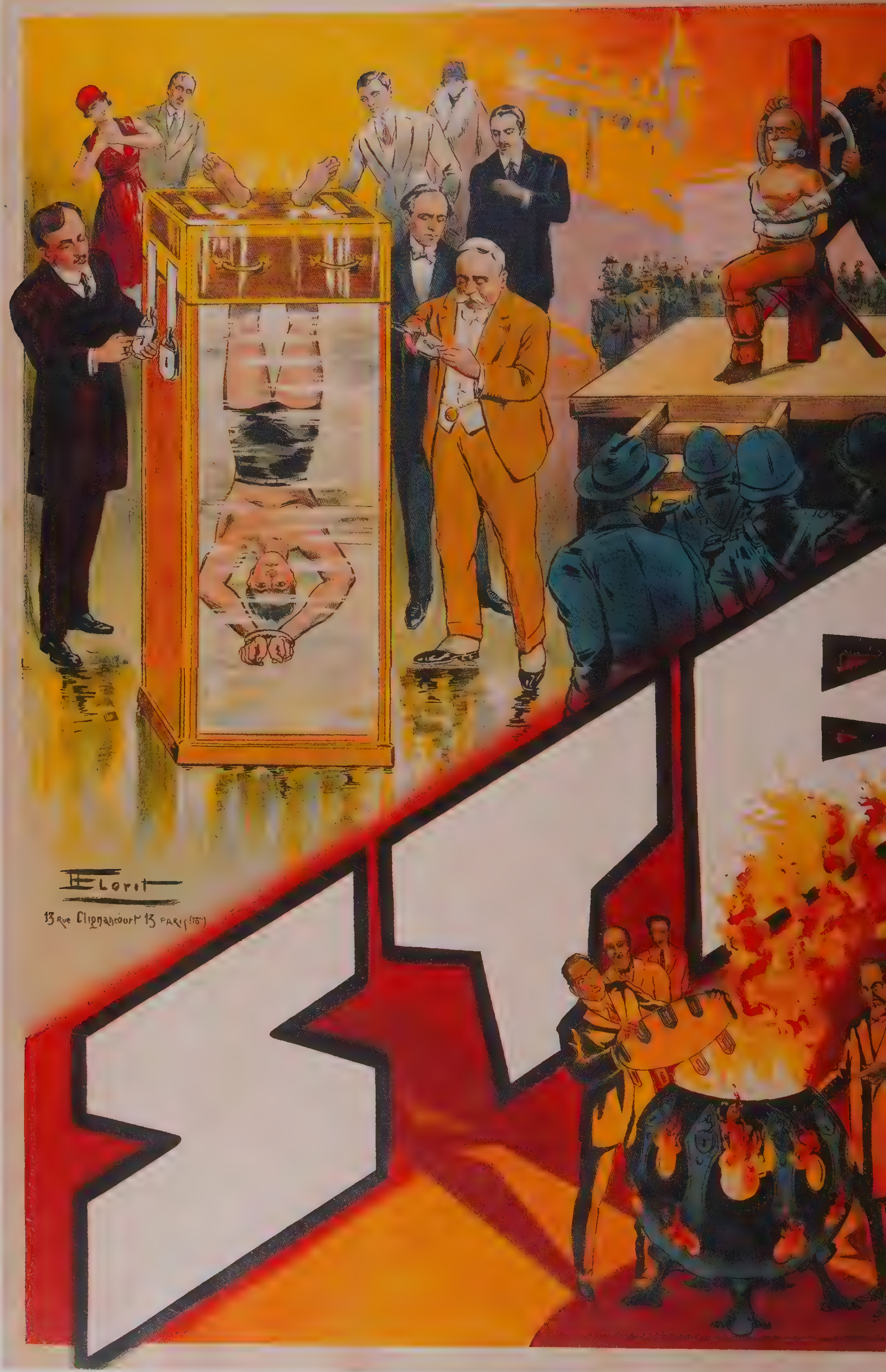

LEVANTE
THE FAMOUS AUSTRALIAN ILLUSIONIST
?
SHOOTING A GIRL THROUGH A SHEET OF ARMOUR PLATE
AND
HIS MAGICAL EXTRAVAGANZA

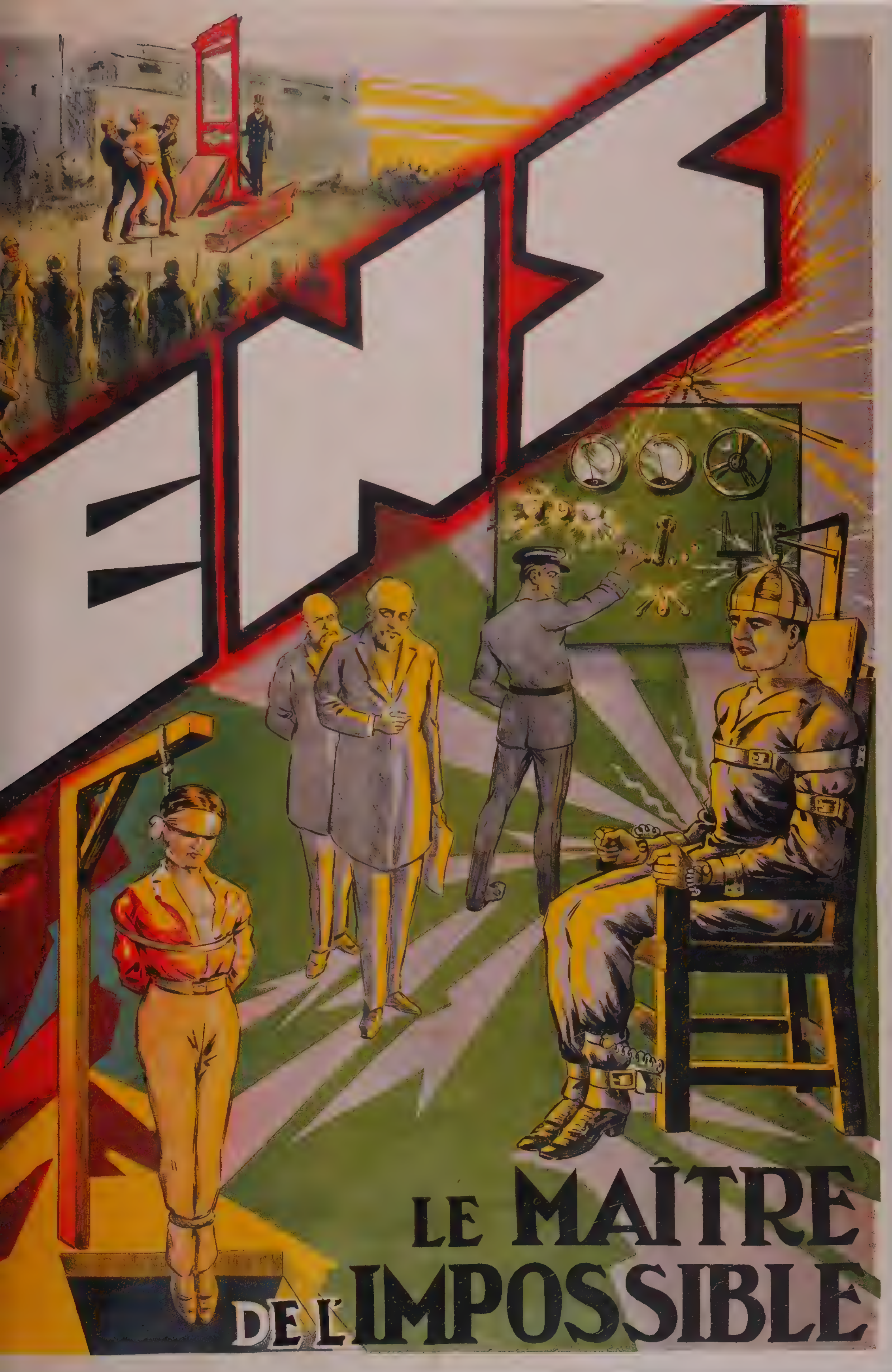




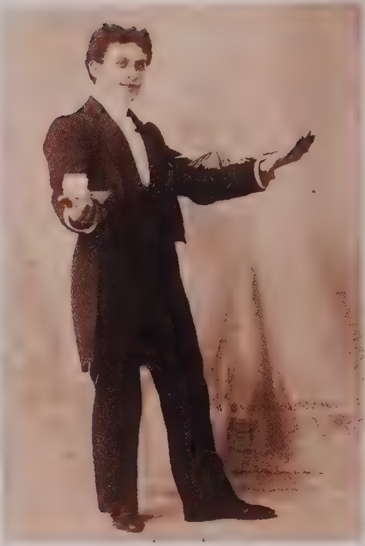
ABOVE LEFT: **1937** The Death Ray Gun proved fatal in an unexpected way. On December 16, 1938, during a show in Derby, England, the projectile landed in the net and a metal pole supporting the net pulled loose, striking one of Levante's assistants standing nearby. She died from the injury.

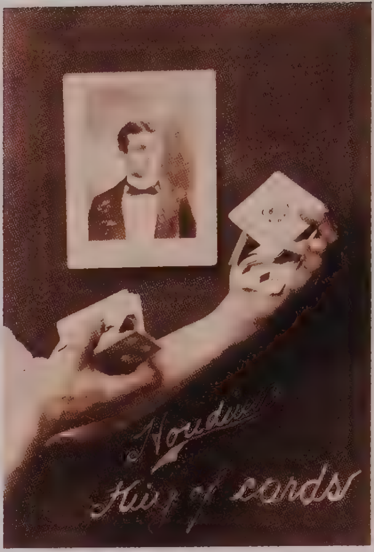
LEFT: **1936** After he used the illusion in vaudeville, Leon sold the Death Ray Gun to the Australian magician Les Levante. Levante poses next to his assistant, who is encased in the metal suit used during the illusion. It was this human shell that was propelled from the cannon.

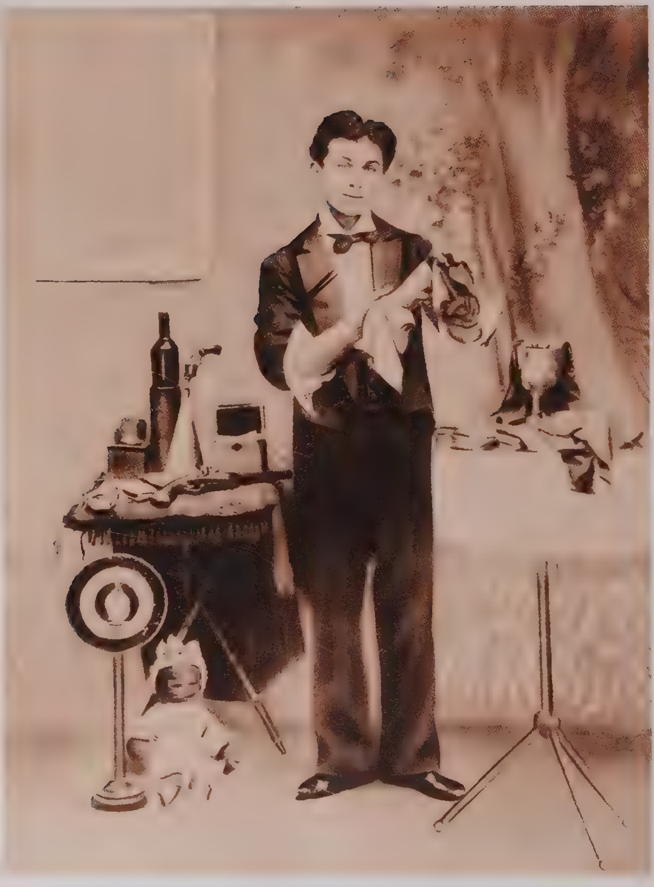

Elorit
13 Rue Clignancourt 13 PARIS (18e)


LE MAÎTRE
DE L'IMPOSSIBLE

PAGES 424–425: **ca. 1930** Steens was the stage name of French escape artist Charles Brisbarre. He began his career as a sleight-of-hand magician, but starting in 1907, he copied Houdini's success and specialized in escapes. Steens expanded his repertoire with a number of lurid sensations. This poster includes his guillotine and electrocution illusions.



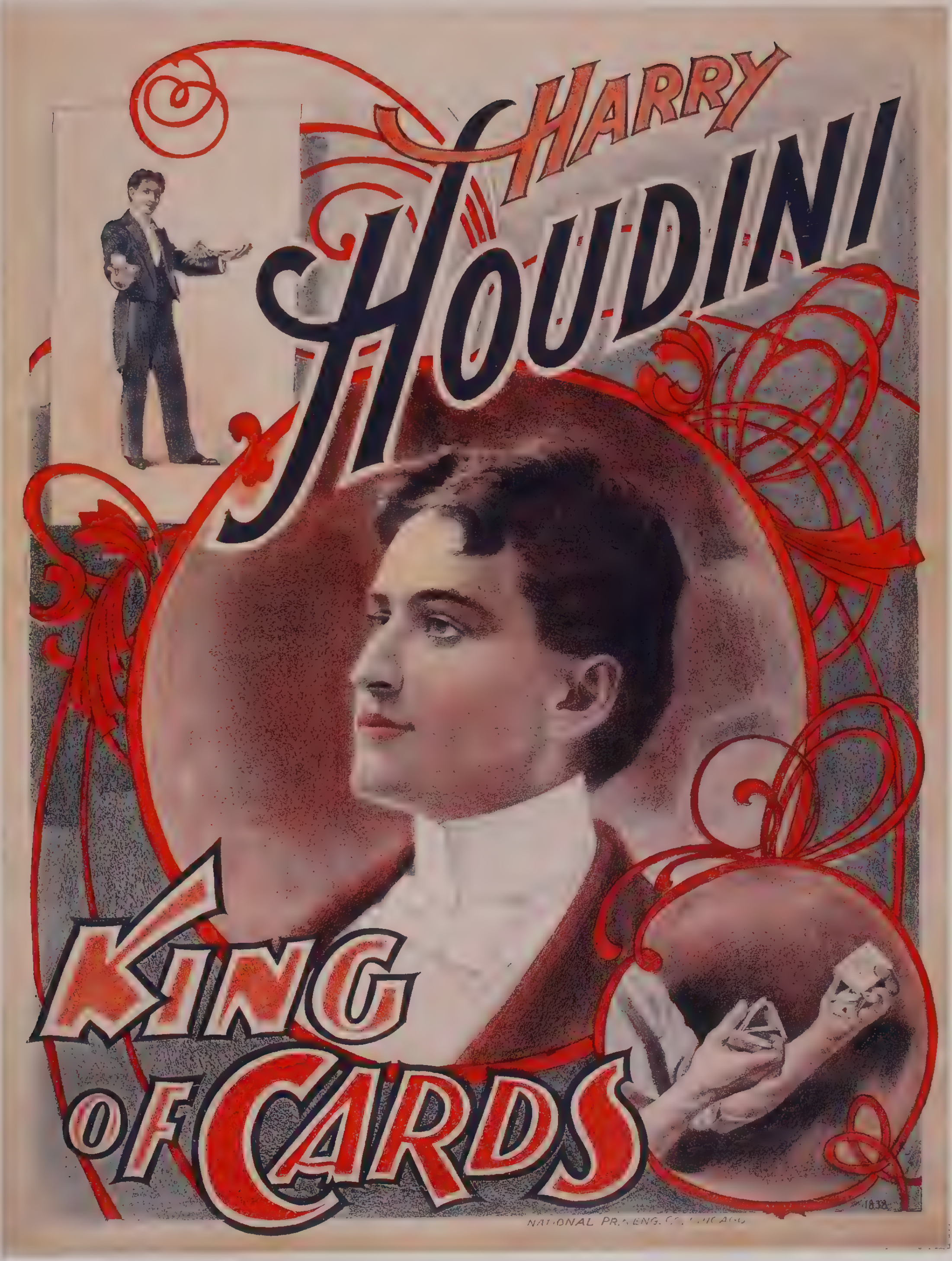


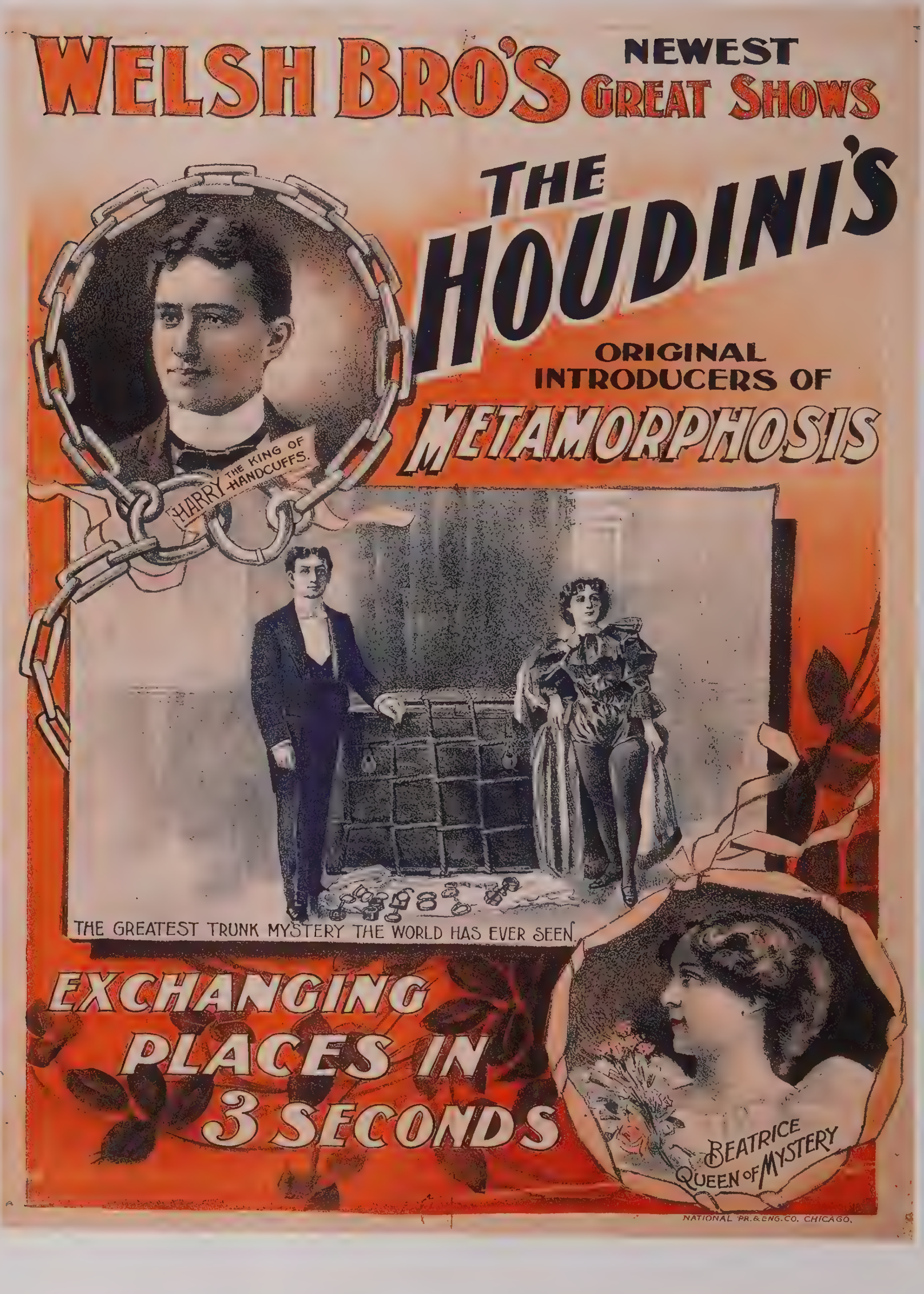


ABOVE: **ca. 1894** Harry Houdini's earliest professional photographs show his prowess with card tricks and fancy shuffles. Magicians would later point out a typical Houdini exaggeration: while the pose shown at left looked impressive, it's actually impossible to spread cards on both arms—unless the performer has three hands!

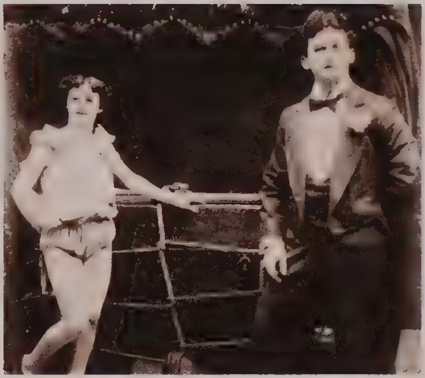
LEFT: **ca. 1894** In his dime museum days, Houdini featured the same tricks as many other magicians, using watches, bottles, and handkerchiefs. Here the young magician pushes a white handkerchief through an empty paper tube, changing it to another color. Houdini only found success when he presented more daring feats.

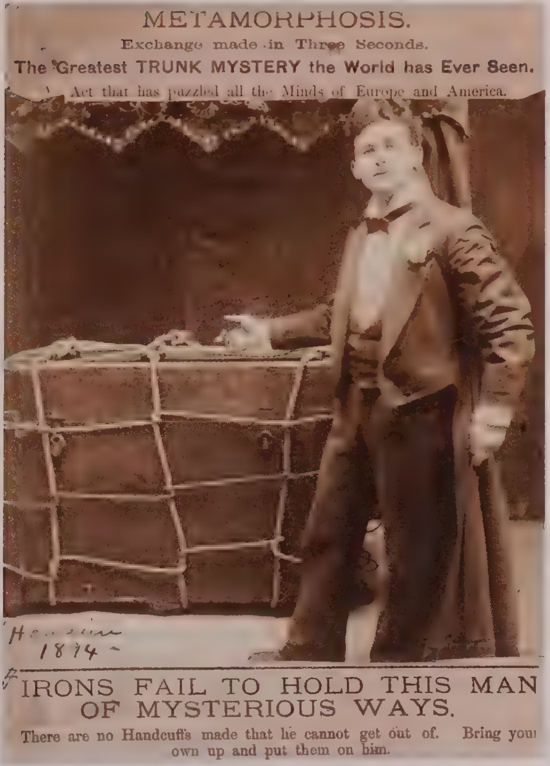
OPPOSITE: **ca. 1893** Early in his career, Houdini presented himself as the "King of Cards." Notice Houdini's publicity photographs, top, incorporated into the design of this poster. Other magicians, such as Howard Thurston and T. Nelson Downs, surpassed Houdini's skills with cards, and were better suited to delicate sleight of hand.


HARRY
HOUDINI
KING
OF CARDS
1838
NATIONAL PR. & ENG. CO. CHICAGO


WELSH BRO'S
NEWEST
GREAT SHOWS
THE
HOUDINI'S
ORIGINAL
INTRODUCERS OF
METAMORPHOSIS
HARRY THE KING OF HANDCUFFS.
THE GREATEST TRUNK MYSTERY THE WORLD HAS EVER SEEN.
EXCHANGING
PLACES IN
3 SECONDS
BEATRICE
QUEEN OF MYSTERY
NATIONAL PR. & ENG. CO. CHICAGO.

ABOVE: **1895** The Houdinis toured the East Coast for one season with the Welsh Brothers Circus, an inauspicious engagement that allowed them to perfect their early escape act, Metamorphosis. Houdini also presented magic, and Bess performed songs. Here, with the cast of the circus, the Houdinis are in the front row, far right.





METAMORPHOSIS.

Exchange made in Three Seconds.

The Greatest TRUNK MYSTERY the World has Ever Seen.

Act that has puzzled all the Minds of Europe and America.

Houdini
1894

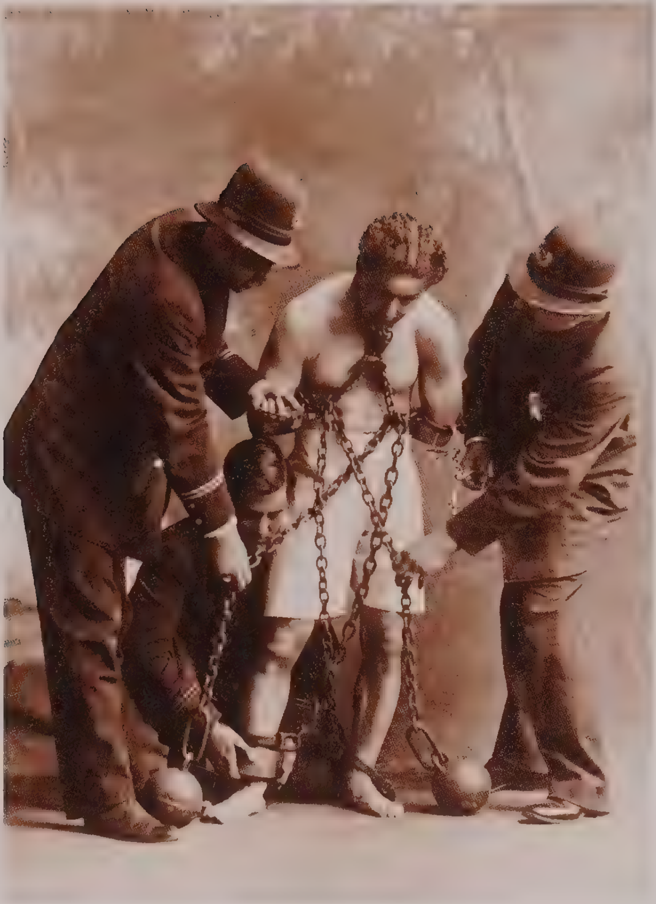
IRONS FAIL TO HOLD THIS MAN
OF MYSTERIOUS WAYS.

There are no Handcuffs made that he cannot get out of. Bring you
own up and put them on him.

ABOVE: **1894** In Metamorphosis, Houdini had his hands tied behind his back and was enclosed in a cloth sack. He was locked inside a trunk, which was then encircled with ropes. Bess closed a curtain in front of the trunk. Houdini escaped in just three seconds. Even more amazing, his wife changed places with him. She was discovered inside the trunk, secured within the sack and ropes.

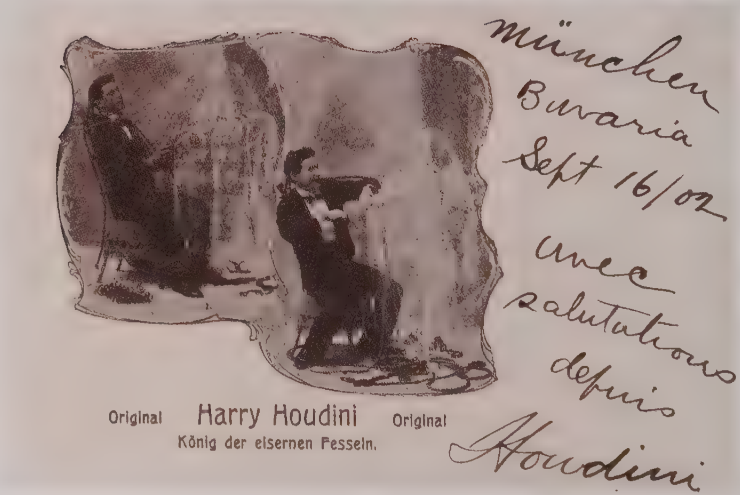
LEFT: **1894** Houdini and Bess's Metamorphosis was only slightly different from previous trunk escapes. But the speed and physical nature of the illusion suited Houdini perfectly. He gave it a sense of genuine challenge, and added the surprising appearance of his wife at the finish.

OPPOSITE: **ca. 1894** Houdini's new bride, Beatrice, or Bess, was the ideal assistant, having started her career in a song-and-dance vaudeville act. The portraits on the poster are artfully arranged to complement the performers: Houdini is surrounded by chain, Bess by ribbon. The artist drew the couple to look older and more experienced than they were.

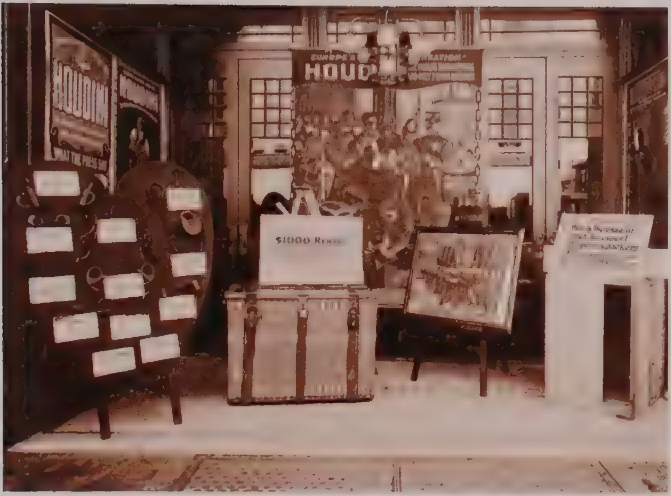


LEFT: **ca. 1906** Publicity photos portray Houdini as the David-like little man, challenged by tall, Goliath-like policemen. Although he was trapped in a tangle of chains, shackles, and handcuffs, he always emerged victorious. The combination of chains and cuffs shown here was a particular challenge for Houdini. His notes recorded that he needed 10 minutes to make this escape.

ABOVE RIGHT: **ca. 1900** The public speculated about Houdini's secrets and mythologized his skills. Some people suspected that his hand compressed, so he could slide a handcuff over his fingers. In fact, Houdini's wrists and hands were like anyone else's, and his secrets relied upon his careful study of locks and picks.


Original
Harry Houdini
Original
König der eisernen Fesseln.
München
Bavaria
Sept 16/02
Avec
salutations
depuis
Houdini

RIGHT: **1902** During his German tour, Houdini used this postcard image to publicize his escape act. The trick photography provides a twist on the traditional séance act. Here the ghosts are summoned to unlock Houdini's handcuffs, setting him free! His actual performance made no claims at ghostly intervention.


HOUDINI
HOUD
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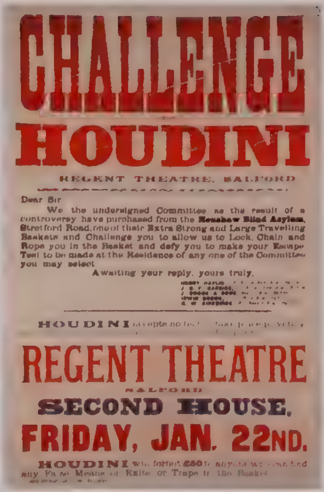


CHALLENGE

HOUDINI

REGENT THEATRE, SALFORD

Dear Sir

We the undersigned Committee as the result of a controversy have purchased from the **Henshaw Blind Asylum**, Stretford Road, one of their Extra Strong and Large Travelling Baskets and Challenge you to allow us to Lock, Chain and Rope you in the Basket and defy you to make your Escape. Test to be made at the Residence of any one of the Committee you may select.

Awaiting your reply, yours truly,

HOUDINI accepts no test to take place privately

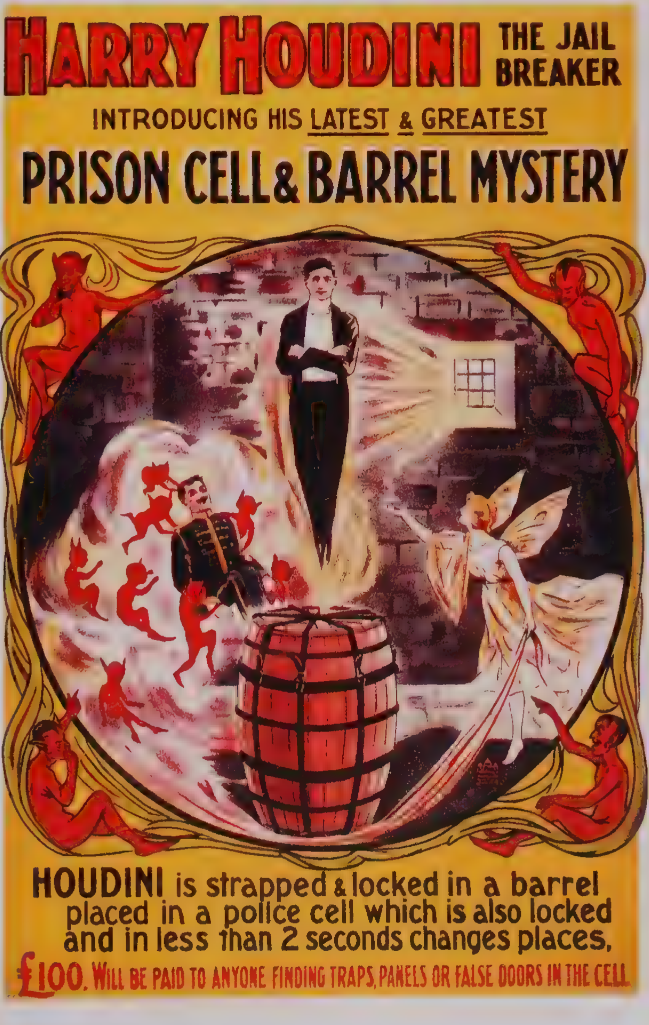
REGENT THEATRE

SALFORD

SECOND HOUSE,

FRIDAY, JAN. 22ND.

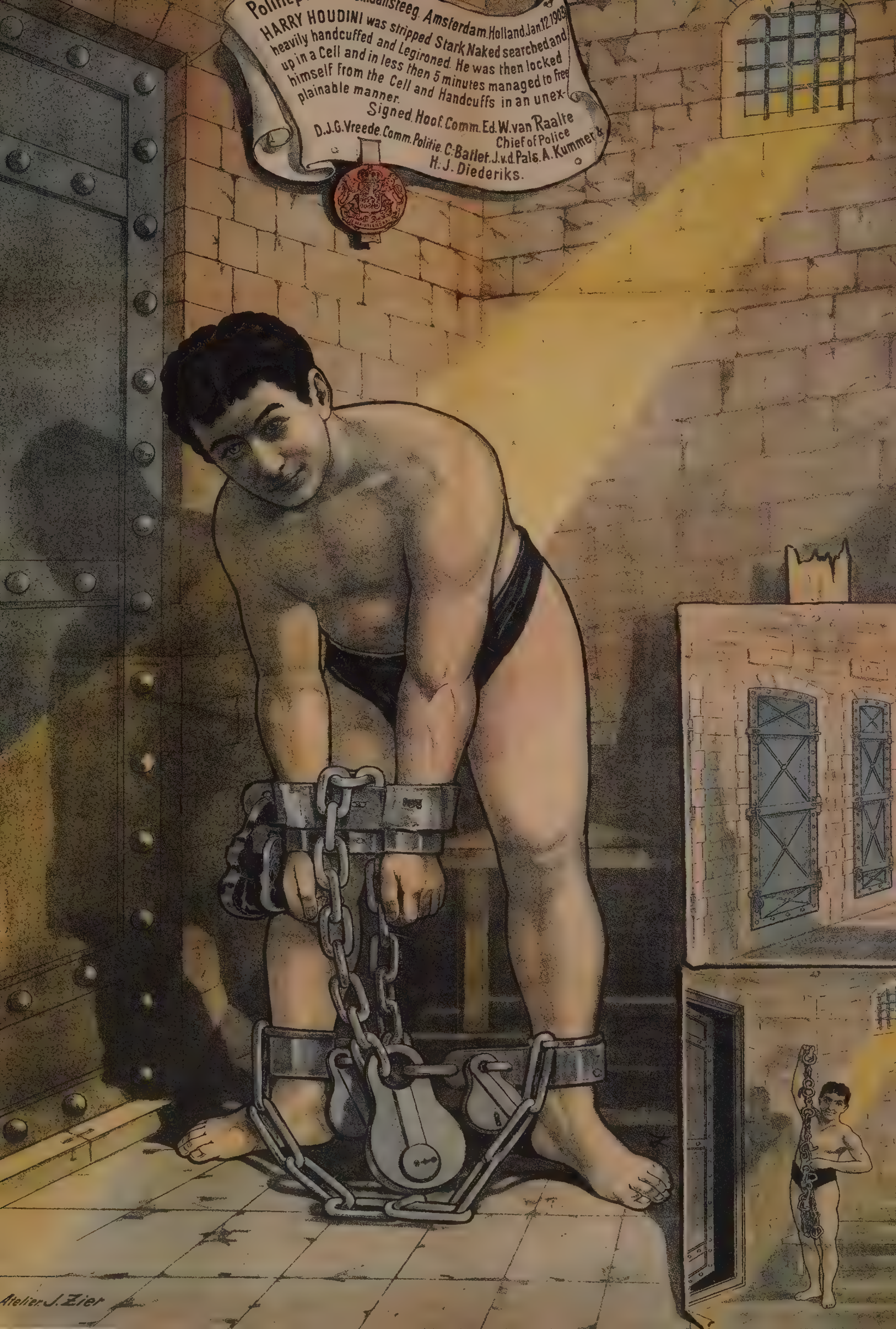
HOUDINI will forfeit £50 to anyone who can find any False Means of Exit or Traps in the Basket


HARRY HOUDINI THE JAIL BREAKER
INTRODUCING HIS LATEST & GREATEST
PRISON CELL & BARREL MYSTERY
HOUDINI is strapped & locked in a barrel placed in a police cell which is also locked and in less than 2 seconds changes places.
£100. WILL BE PAID TO ANYONE FINDING TRAPS, PANELS OR FALSE DOORS IN THE CELL

ABOVE LEFT: **ca. 1910** In theaters, Houdini filled the lobby with his collection of handcuffs, hampers, and crates. Before the public even bought their tickets, they knew they were about to see something extraordinary. "All of his publicity was designed to create a legend," according to writer Walter B. Gibson.

ABOVE RIGHT: **1909** Houdini encouraged local merchants, builders, workmen, and caretakers to challenge him to an escape. This challenge is typical, and was posted around Salford, England, to encourage attendance at the special performance. "Houdini accepts no test to take place privately," it reads. The goal was publicity.

RIGHT: **ca. 1906** Houdini's most legendary achievements were often unsuitable for a stage show. This escape from a barrel and a "prison cell" was an attempt to capitalize on his jail escapes. It wasn't a success. A jail cell on stage was obviously a piece of scenery, not worthy of a real Houdini challenge.

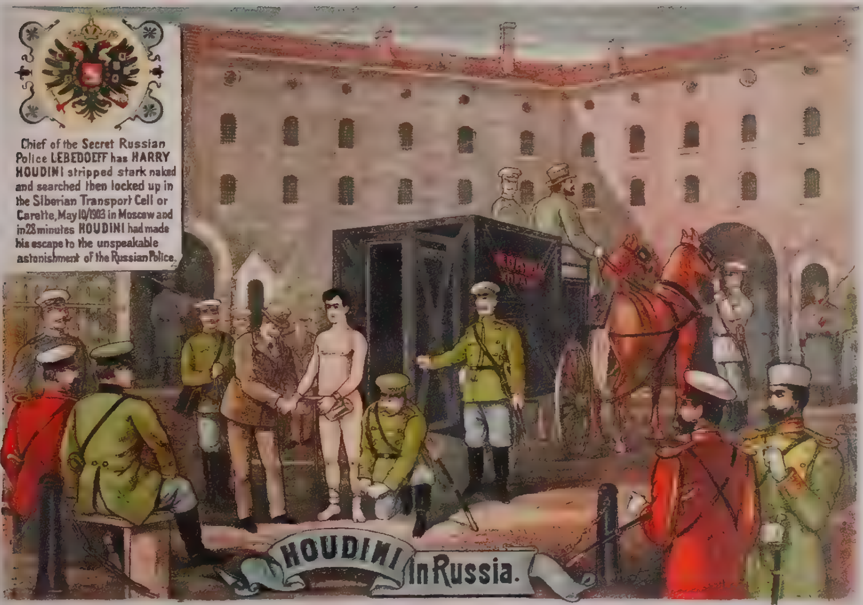

Politiep
alsteeg. Amsterdam. Holland. Jan. 12. 1903.
HARRY HOUDINI was stripped Stark Naked searched and heavily handcuffed and Legironed. He was then locked up in a Cell and in less then 5 minutes managed to free himself from the Cell and Handcuffs in an unexplainable manner.
Signed. Hoof. Comm. Ed. W. van Raalte
Chief of Police
D.J.G. Vreede. Comm. Politie. C. Baflet. J.v.d. Pals. A. Kummer &
H. J. Diederiks.
Atelier J. Zier

OPPOSITE: **1903** A Dutch poster records Houdini in the midst of a jailbreak, and promises even more wonders at the local variety theater. For many Europeans, Houdini came to symbolize the typical American. He was brash, arrogant, and proud. He managed to succeed at every one of his challenges.

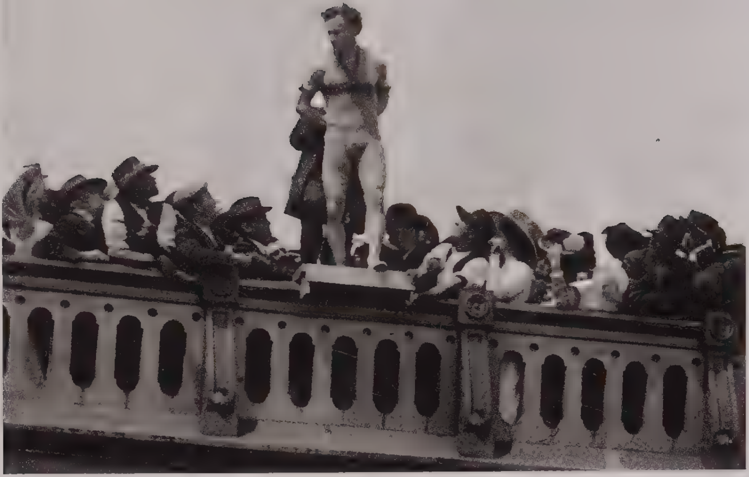
RIGHT: **ca. 1906** A news photographer records the last image of Houdini before one of his jail escapes. He was stripped, searched, and locked inside the city's best cell. Then the police and reporters adjourned to the office to await the results. Houdini escaped minutes later. In 1906 in Washington, D.C., he escaped from the jail cell that had once held Charles Guiteau, the assassin of President Garfield.

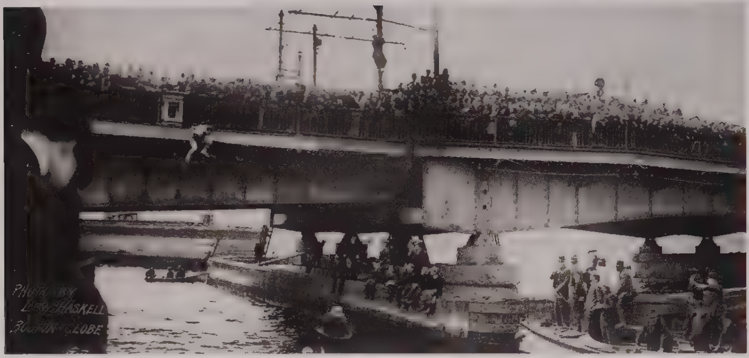
LEFT: **ca. 1906** One of Houdini's first experiments with cinema was an action-packed short film of his jail-cell escape and his escape from a straitjacket. For this sequence, the policemen were actors and the cell was a film set. Note the painted window on the back wall.

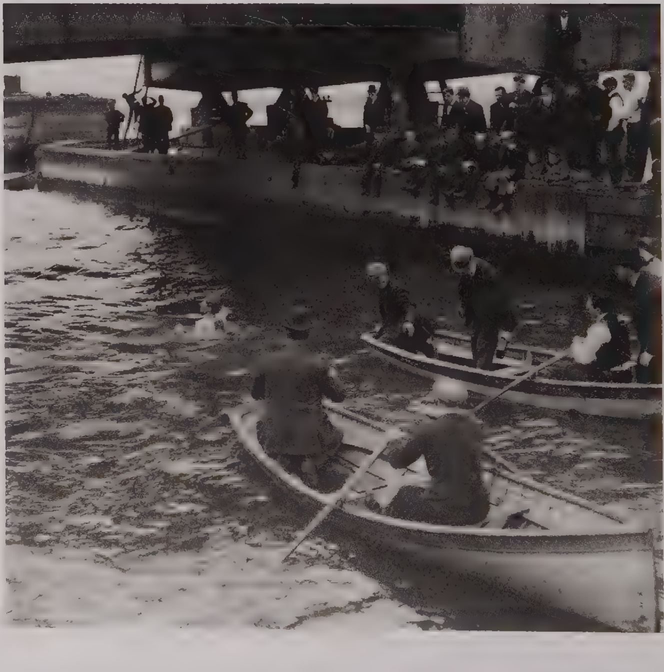
BELOW: **1903** The many publicity stunts generated newspaper stories for Houdini, brought crowds to see his shows, and were later enshrined as legends to burnish his professional luster. During his Russian tour, Houdini successfully escaped from a Russian transport cell. He quickly commemorated the event with a poster so that his audiences around the world could marvel at the event.



Chief of the Secret Russian Police LEBEDOEFF has HARRY HOUDINI stripped stark naked and searched then locked up in the Siberian Transport Cell or Carette, May 10/1903 in Moscow and in 28 minutes HOUDINI had made his escape to the unspeakable astonishment of the Russian Police.
HOUDINI In Russia.





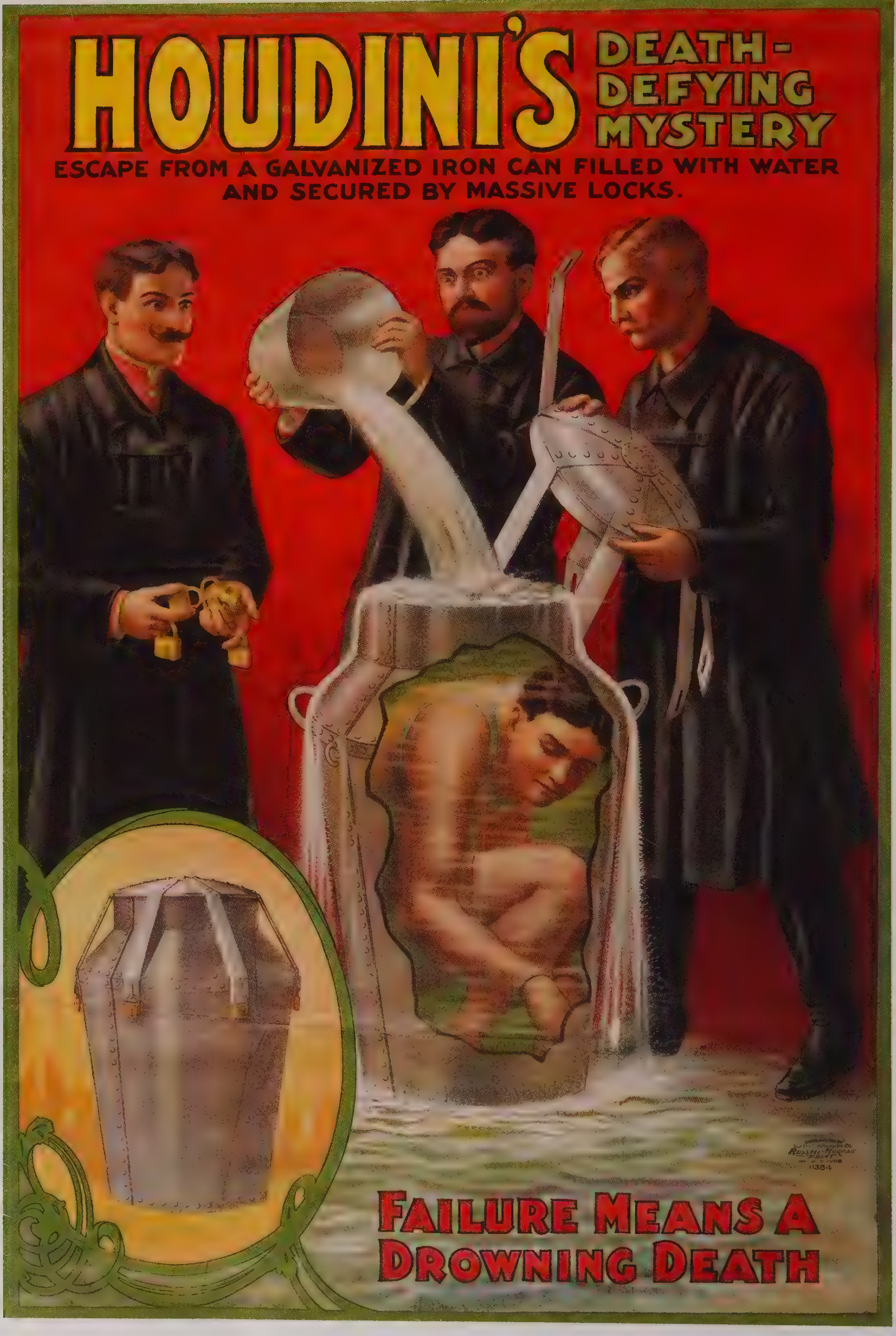


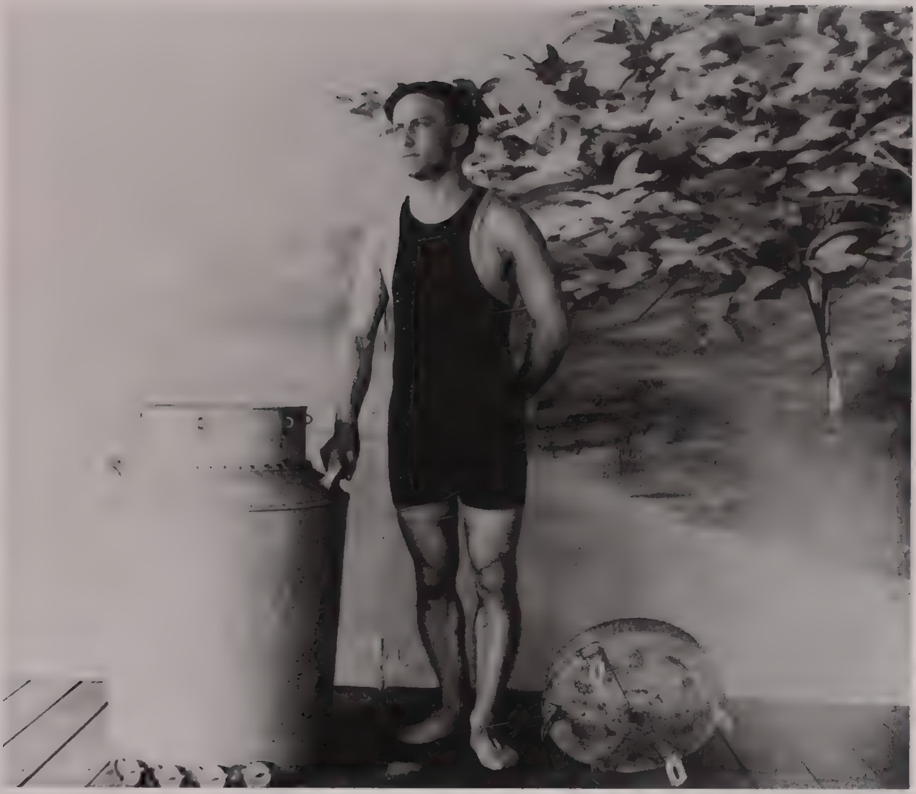
ABOVE: **ca. 1907** Houdini's first bridge jump was in Detroit, Michigan, in November 1906. These popular stunts guaranteed crowds, newspaper reporters, and ticket sales. Weighed down with police handcuffs and chains, Houdini would throw himself into a river as a crowd of onlookers held their breath, waiting for him to swim to the surface. The bottom photo shows him jumping into the Charles River in Boston. Hands locked behind his back, he has just left the edge of the bridge.

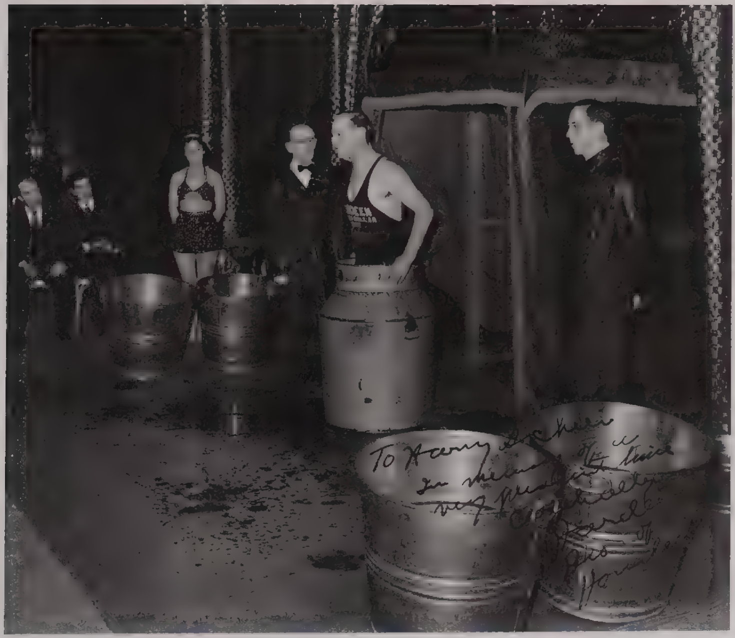
RIGHT: **1907** Several rowboats circle the waters, waiting for some sign of the escape artist. After a minute or two, Houdini would bob to the surface, cuffs in hands, waving proudly to the crowd on the bridge. "I have leaped from a bridge knowing I could not leap, knowing I would strike the water flat and be killed. But in the air, my nerve came back," he later wrote.

RIGHT: **ca. 1908** A dangerous high dive by Houdini is captured in this photograph. Houdini braved muddy or freezing waters, concentrating on the escape that was necessary for his survival. "That's an awful river," he complained to a New Orleans reporter about the Mississippi River. "I'll get into the water some day, my trick will fail, and then good night!"

LEFT: **ca. 1910** This jump from a small boat in a harbor was watched by crowds on the shore. During one such leap into the dirty Yarra River of Melbourne, Australia, Houdini's impact dislodged a corpse from the riverbed. When Houdini bobbed to the surface, he saw the body floating beside him. The sight was so frightening that he momentarily froze and had to be lifted into the police boat.

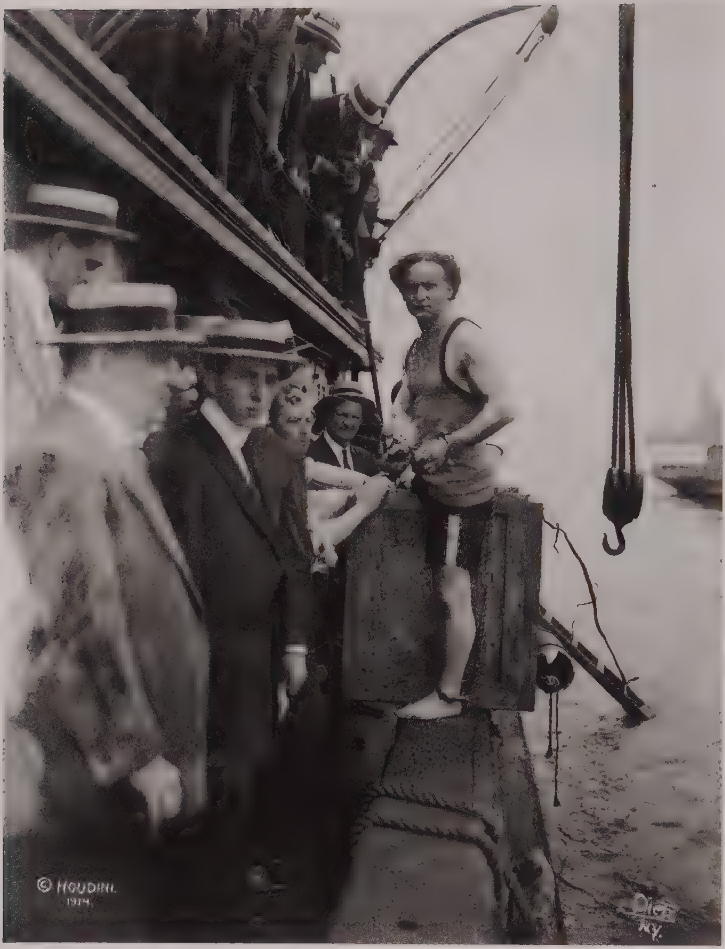

HOUDINI'S
DEATH-DEFYING MYSTERY
ESCAPE FROM A GALVANIZED IRON CAN FILLED WITH WATER AND SECURED BY MASSIVE LOCKS.
Russell-Morgan Print
FAILURE MEANS A DROWNING DEATH





ABOVE AND LEFT: **1908 and ca. 1933** Houdini squeezed inside the oversize milk can filled with water until his head was submerged. Quickly, assistants locked the lid on top. Minutes later, Houdini, dripping wet, pushed the curtain aside. "The new can trick is the best I have ever invented," Houdini boasted to a friend. After Houdini's death, his Milk Can Escape was performed by his brother Hardeen in Atlantic City, New Jersey.

OPPOSITE: **1908** Houdini's Milk Can Escape, first performed in 1908, reignited his career. It was a brilliant invention that allowed him to bring the excitement of his water escapes to a vaudeville stage. This poster captures the nail-biting terror. The central image is a special cutaway peek at the can's interior, offering a view that was never seen onstage.

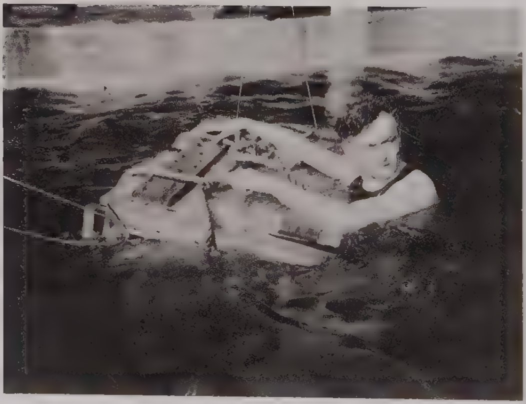


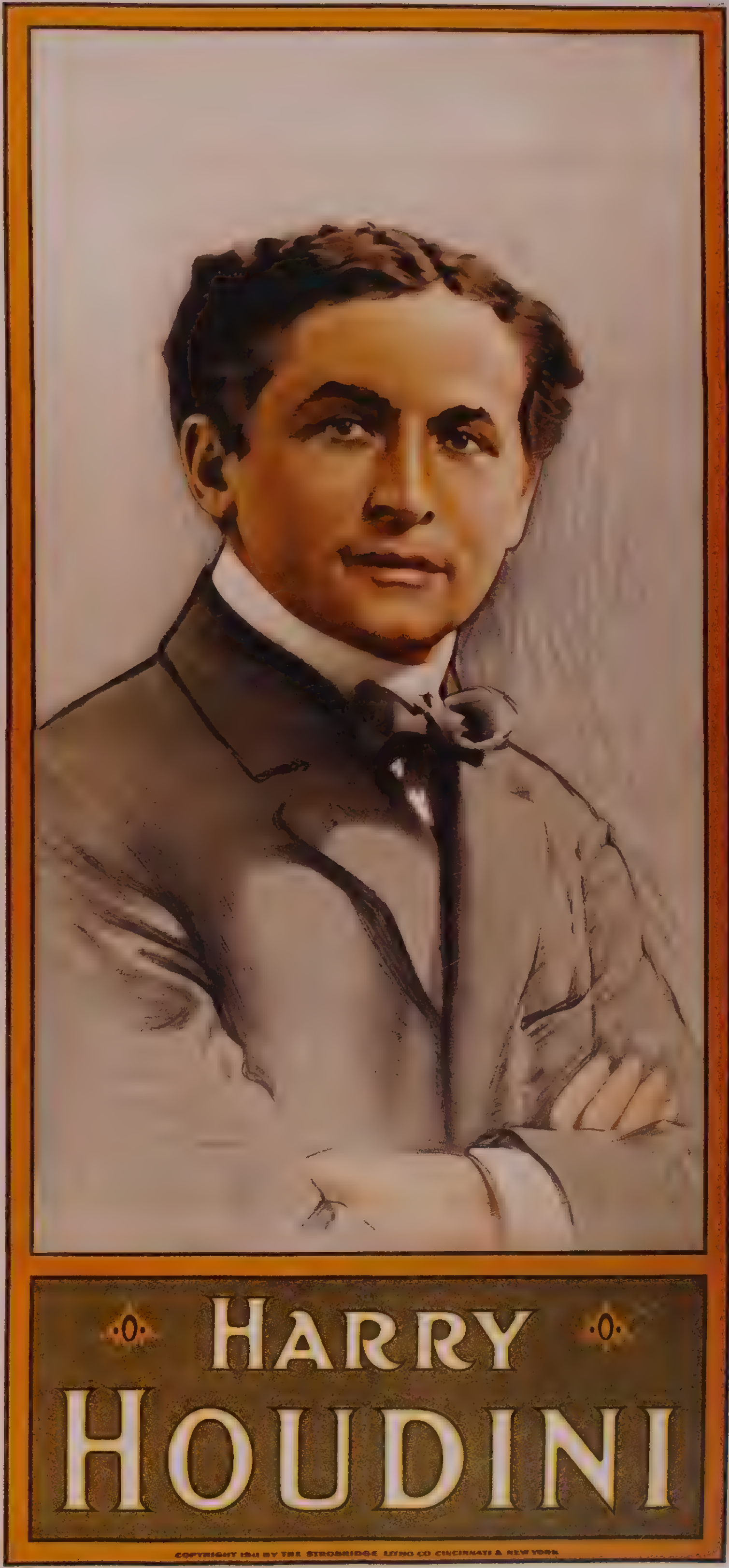
LEFT: **1914** When his competition began copying his handcuff jumps, Houdini took the next step. He had first introduced his new stunt in New York Harbor in 1912. A wooden packing box was examined, and Houdini was handcuffed and then securely locked inside the box. Notice the pipes—these were filled with lead to ensure the box would sink to the bottom.

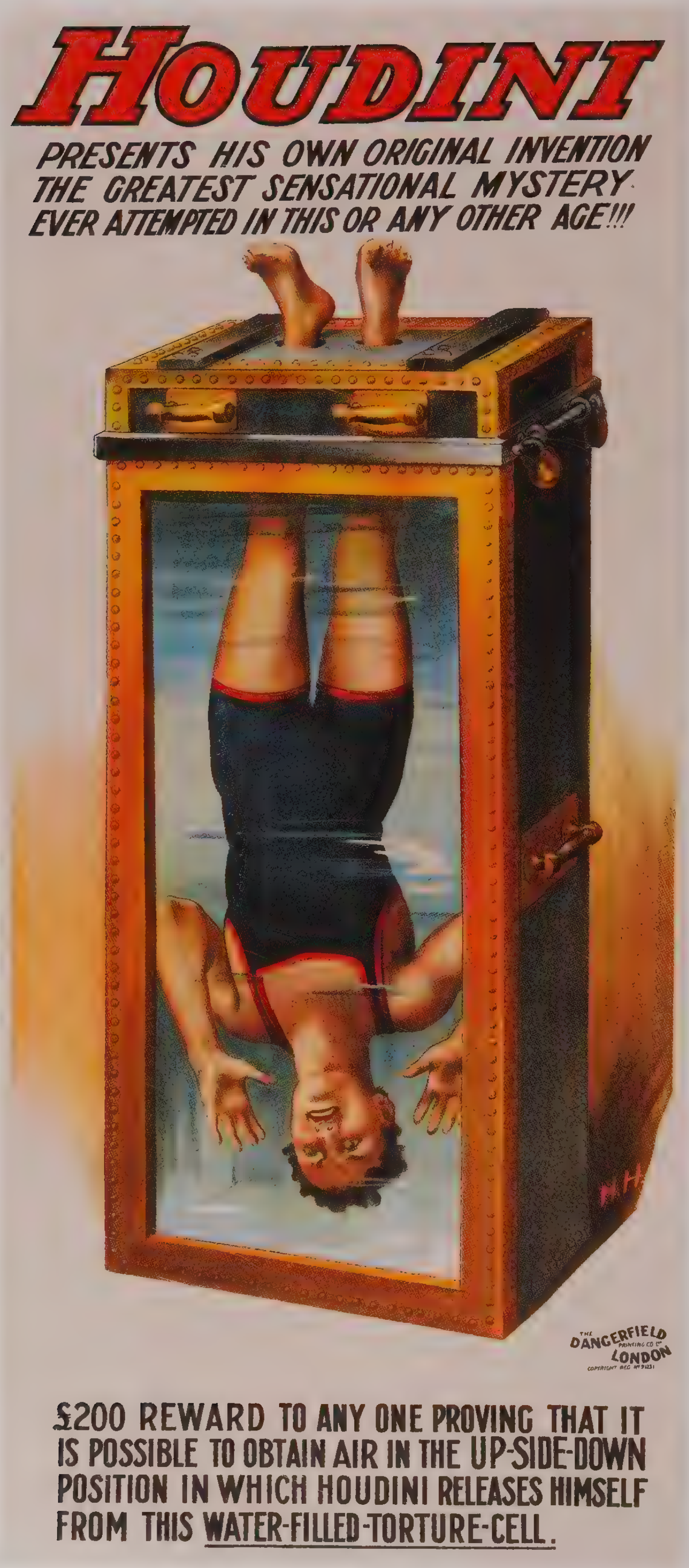
BELOW LEFT: **1914** As 100,000 people jammed the shoreline to watch, the box and Houdini quickly sank beneath the waves; water entered through holes in the sides of the box. Minutes later, Houdini bobbed to the surface, free of his bonds. The box was hauled up, still locked tightly.

BELOW RIGHT: **ca. 1912** "If the public knew how much I really flirt with death in some of my stunts," he explained, "I would never be accused of getting advertising free." With the success of his outdoor box escape, shown here, he brought the feat to Hammerstein's Theater in New York City in 1912, using its water tank.

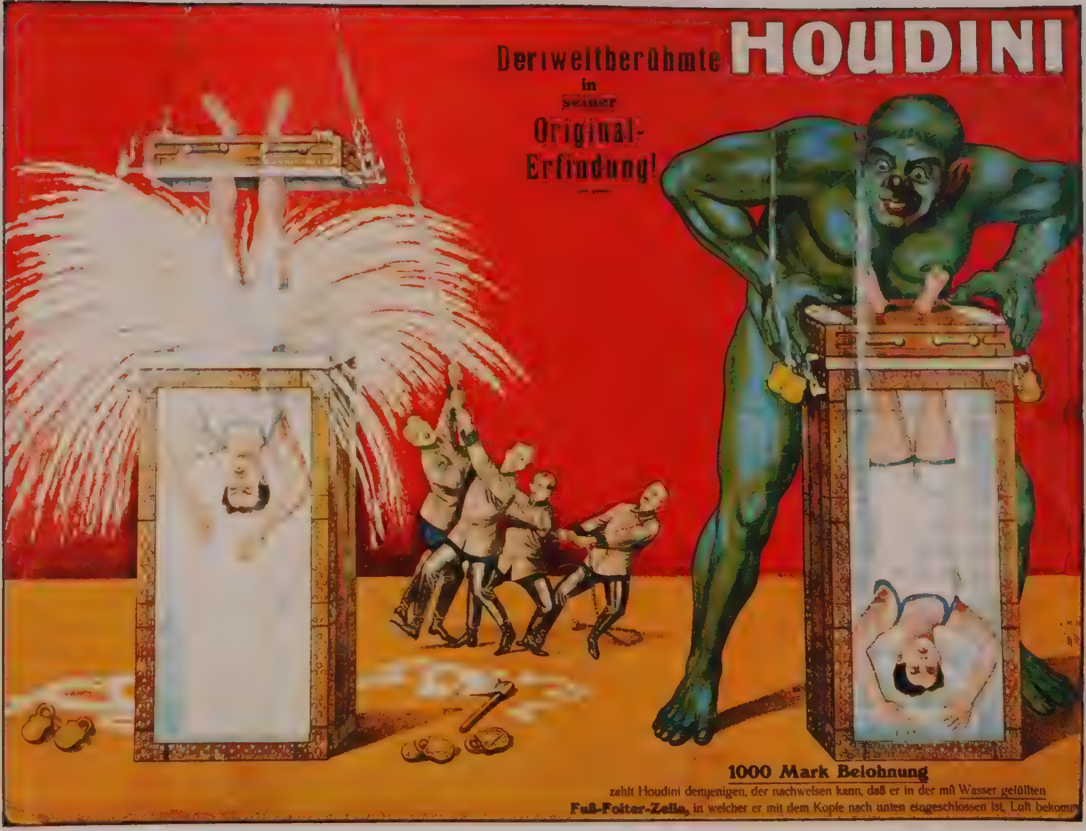
OPPOSITE: **1911** By 1911, Houdini was a star, and no longer needed to boast of his achievements or promise what the audience would see during his vaudeville performance. This striking, colossal seven-foot-tall portrait was enough to lure an audience inside the theater—the brash American escape artist, smiling and self-confident, had arrived!




HARRY
HOUDINI
COPYRIGHT 1911 BY THE STROBRIDGE LITHO CO CINCINNATI & NEW YORK

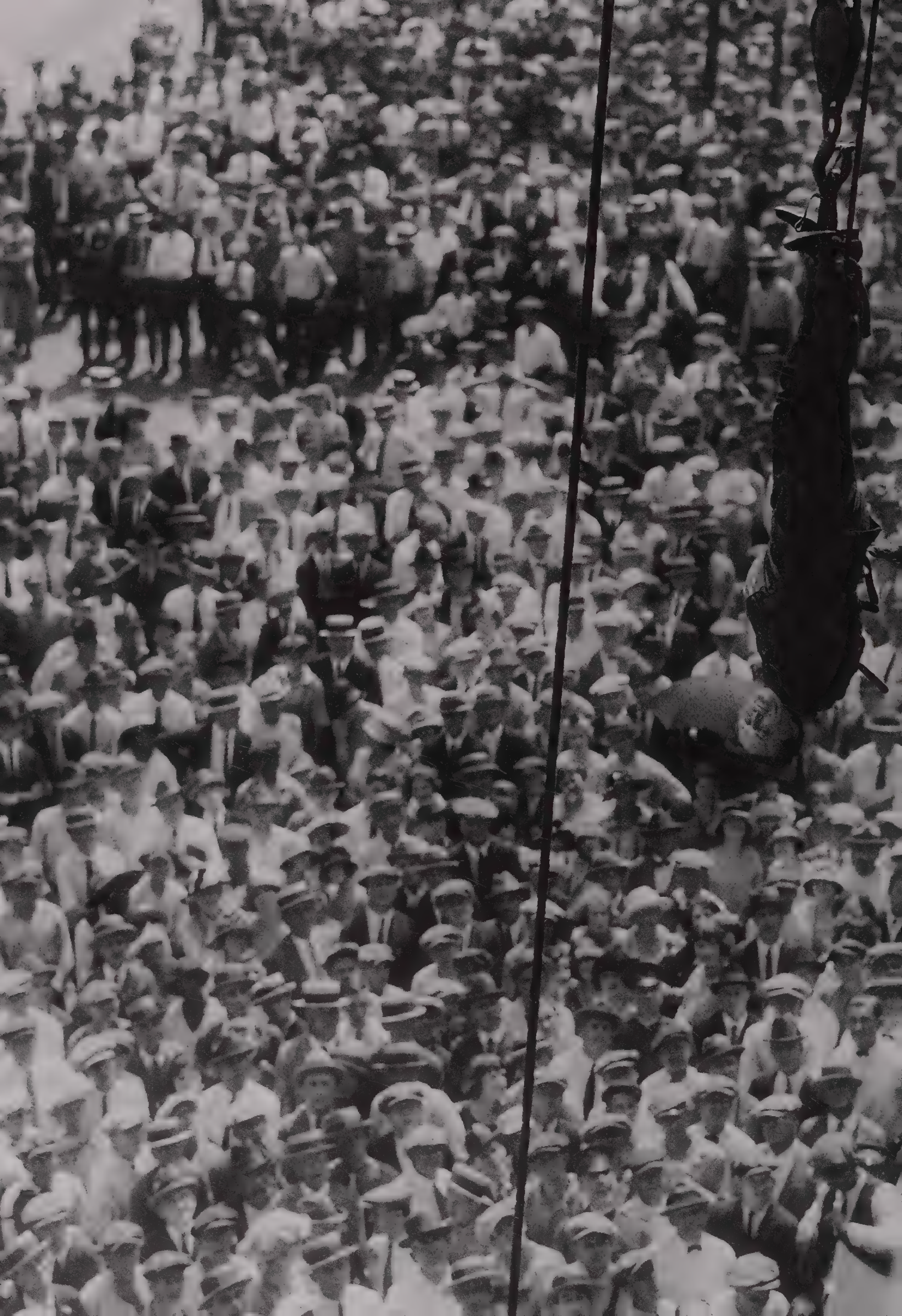

HOUDINI
PRESENTS HIS OWN ORIGINAL INVENTION
THE GREATEST SENSATIONAL MYSTERY
EVER ATTEMPTED IN THIS OR ANY OTHER AGE!!!
H.H.
THE DANGERFIELD PRINTING CO LTD LONDON
£200 REWARD TO ANY ONE PROVING THAT IT IS POSSIBLE TO OBTAIN AIR IN THE UP-SIDE-DOWN POSITION IN WHICH HOUDINI RELEASES HIMSELF FROM THIS WATER-FILLED-TORTURE-CELL.

LEFT: **ca. 1913** With his amazing Water Torture Cell, Houdini once again sprinted past his rival escape artists. Now the audience could see his precarious position: locked upside down in a glass tank. Houdini's head was trapped beneath the water, five feet from the locks on the outside. This seven-foot-tall poster featured a life-size image of him.

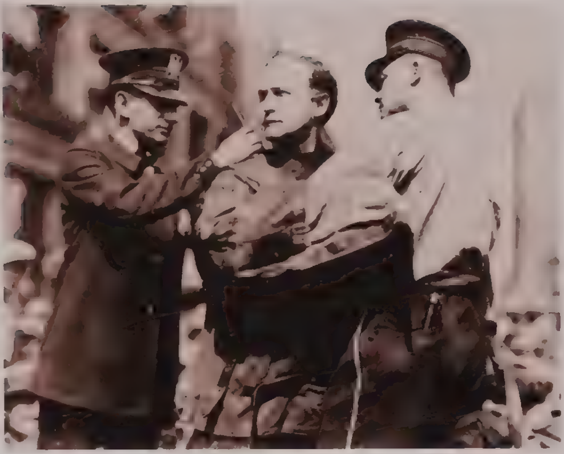

Der weltberühmte HOUDINI
in
seiner
Original-
Erfindung!
1000 Mark Belohnung
zahlt Houdini demjenigen, der nachweisen kann, daß er in der mit Wasser gefüllten
Fuß-Folter-Zelle, in welcher er mit dem Kopfe nach unten eingeschlossen ist, Luft bekomm

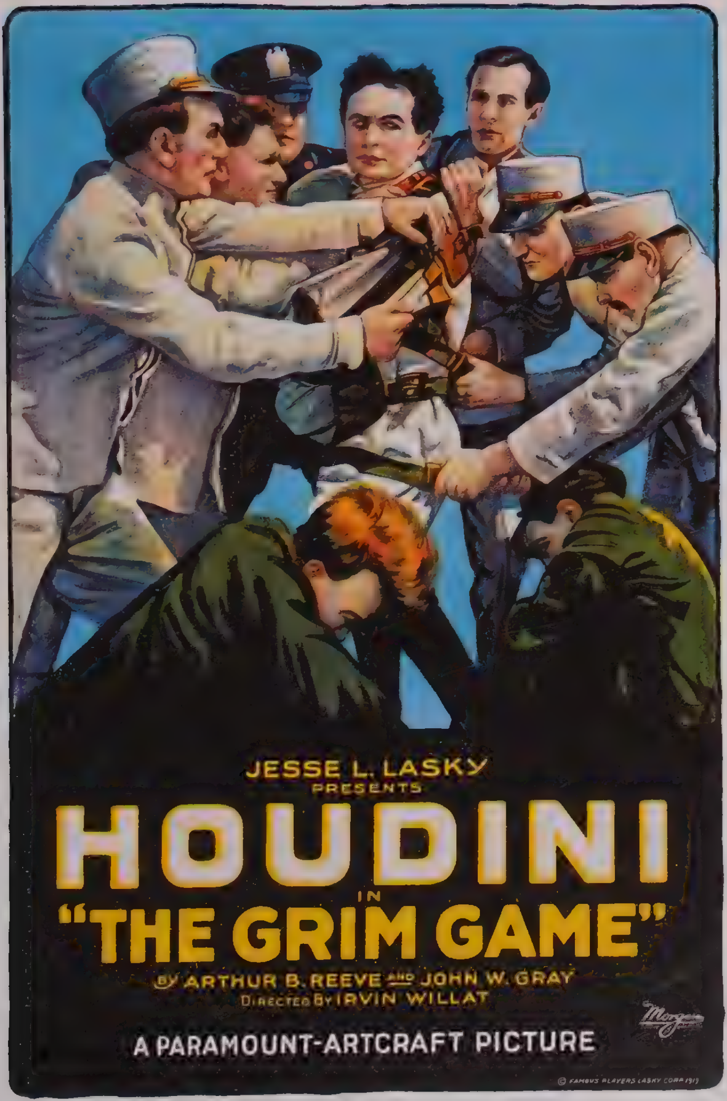
ABOVE: **ca. 1913** This German advertising flyer shows the dramatic action as a group of assistants lowers Houdini into the tank, displacing the water. The blue green giant was an artist's embellishment, but the thrilling Water Torture Cell seemed to be taken from a fairy tale or a gothic suspense novel.

RIGHT: **1913** A snapshot shows Houdini practicing inside his Water Torture Cell, without the water. The apparatus was beautiful and threatening: polished mahogany, bright brass, and sparkling nickel. Author S. H. Sharpe, a tough critic of his fellow magicians, later recorded his memories of the feat: "The only magician whom I felt really came up to the label on the box was Houdini with his Water Torture Cell."



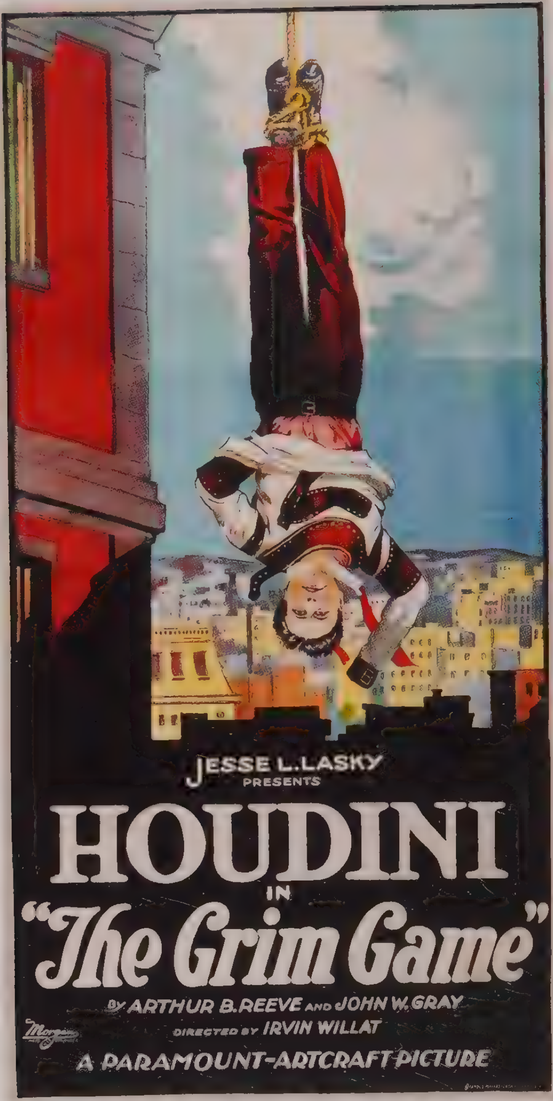
OPPOSITE: **ca. 1918** Houdini began performing the upside-down straitjacket escape in 1915 as a publicity stunt. Dangling from his ankles, he would be raised by ropes to a cornice of a downtown building, twisting and contorting as crowds cheered him on. It was always performed in front of a newspaper office, ensuring photos, and always at noon, guaranteeing a sidewalk filled with lunchtime crowds.




JESSE L. LASKY
PRESENTS
HOUDINI
IN
"THE GRIM GAME"
BY ARTHUR B. REEVE AND JOHN W. GRAY
DIRECTED BY IRVIN WILLAT
A PARAMOUNT-ARTCRAFT PICTURE
Morgan
© FAMOUS PLAYERS LASKY CORP 1919

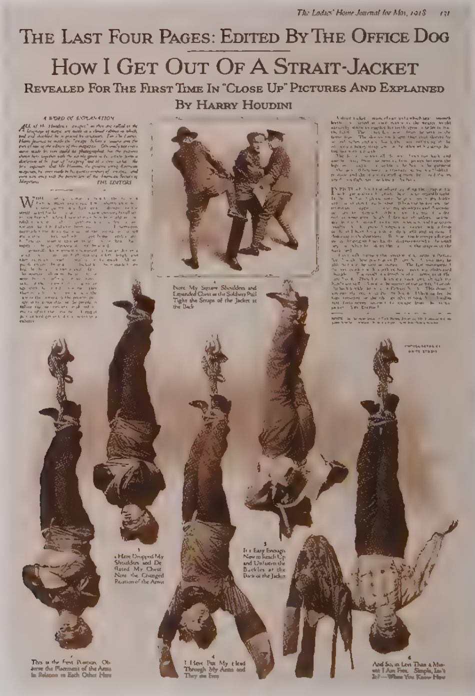
ABOVE: **ca. 1918** Houdini is buckled into his straitjacket by the local police. He learned the straitjacket escape around 1900. But it was his brother Theo, a vaudeville escape artist who performed as Hardeen, who realized that the escape was more exciting when the audience could see how it was done.

LEFT: **1919** Houdini's first feature film, *The Grim Game*, was simply a vehicle for Houdini's escapes. The plot was sprinkled with breathtaking stunts. By 1919, Houdini had become famous for his straitjacket escape, and it was included in the film. Shown here is the standard Houdini image, amplified by Hollywood—the brave little man, threatened by authority.



OPPOSITE: **ca. 1918** As a cheer rose from the sidewalks, Houdini reached the climax of the escape, pulling the jacket over his head, unfolding his arms, and signaling triumph. A moment later, he dropped the jacket to the crowd below. The next morning, photographs like this would appear on the front page of the local newspaper.

LEFT: **1919** *The Grim Game* offered a spectacular close-up view of Houdini's ordeal that could not be seen by the crowd on the sidewalks. This poster depicts Houdini halfway through the escape, as he fought to pull his arms over his head.



The Ladies' Home Journal for May, 1918 131

THE LAST FOUR PAGES: EDITED BY THE OFFICE DOG

HOW I GET OUT OF A STRAIT-JACKET

REVEALED FOR THE FIRST TIME IN "CLOSE UP" PICTURES AND EXPLAINED

BY HARRY HOUDINI

A WORD OF EXPLANATION

THE EDITORS

Note My Square Shoulders and Expanded Chest as the Soldiers Pull Tight the Straps of the Jacket at the Back

This is the First Position. Observe the Placement of the Arms in Relation to Each Other Here

I Have Dropped My Shoulders and Deflated My Chest. Note the Changed Position of the Arms

It is Easy Enough Now to Reach Up and Unfasten the Buckles at the Back of the Jacket

I Have Put My Head Through My Arms and They are Free

And So, in Less Than a Minute I Am Free. Simple, Isn't It?—When You Know How

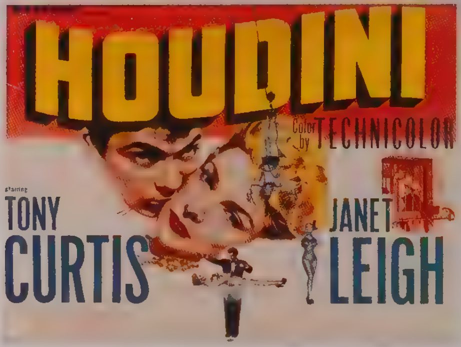
RIGHT: **1918** Because Houdini's strait-jacket escape was performed in front of his audience, he could satisfy the public's curiosity and publish an article explaining how he did it. Notice the soldiers forcibly securing Houdini in the jacket. The escape artist reduced his procedure to a few deceptively easy steps, adding, "Simple, Isn't It?—When You Know How."

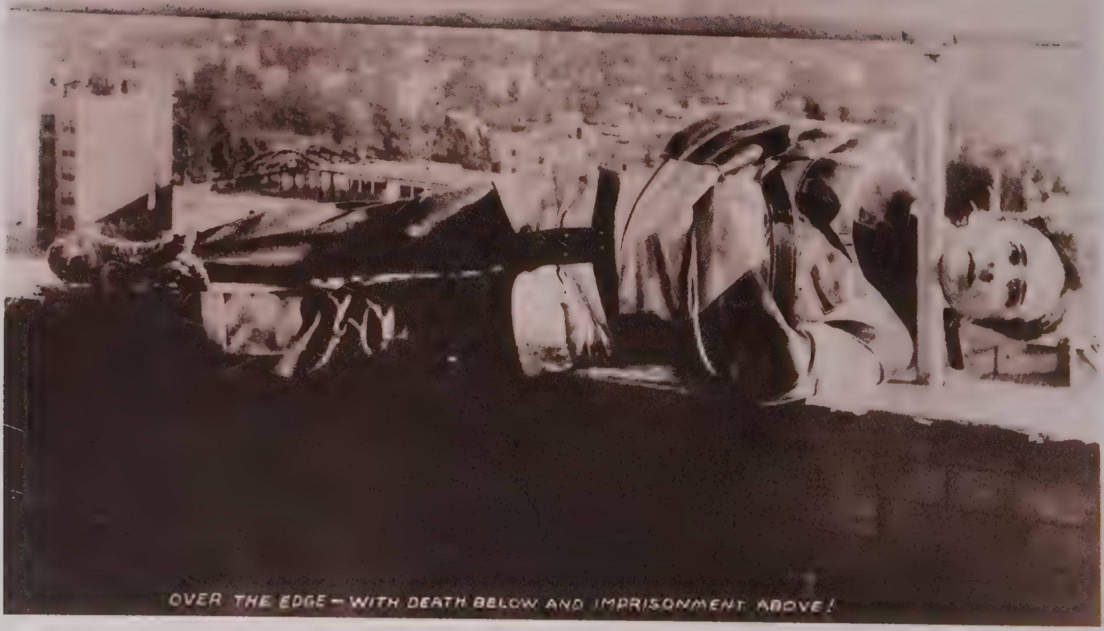
LEFT: 1919 During the filming of *The Grim Game*, cameras recorded an accidental crash between two barnstorming planes, and the producers incorporated the crash into the plot of the film. Contrary to publicity stories, it was a stuntman, not Houdini, dangling between the planes during the crash. Houdini had been watching safely from the ground.

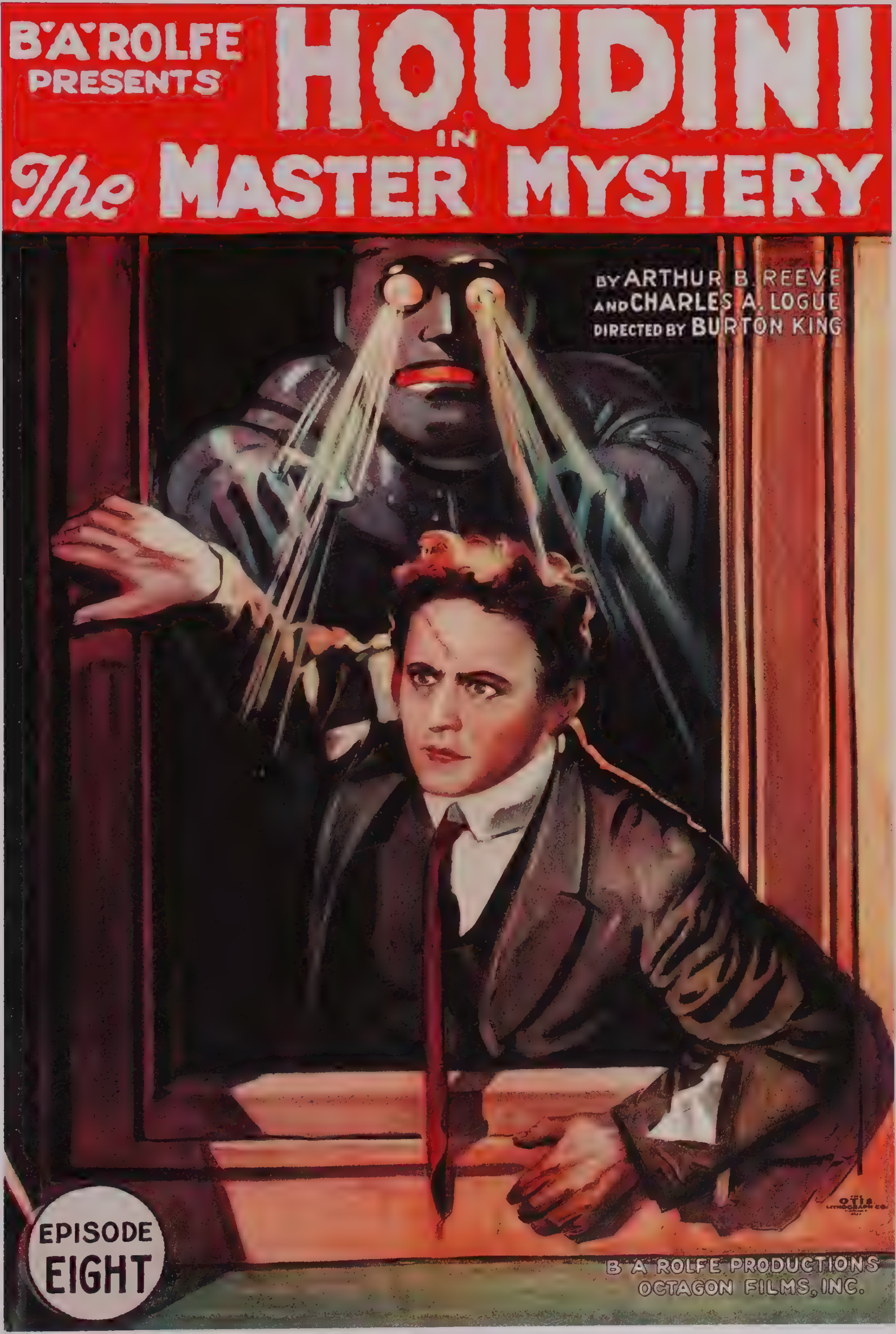
CENTER: 1953 The Hollywood film *Houdini* fictionalized the escape artist's greatest feats and most daring adventures. In an effort to add a distinct climax, the film portrayed Houdini dying while attempting the Water Torture Cell for the first time. It wasn't true. Houdini performed this escape for 13 years, successfully, before his death in 1926.

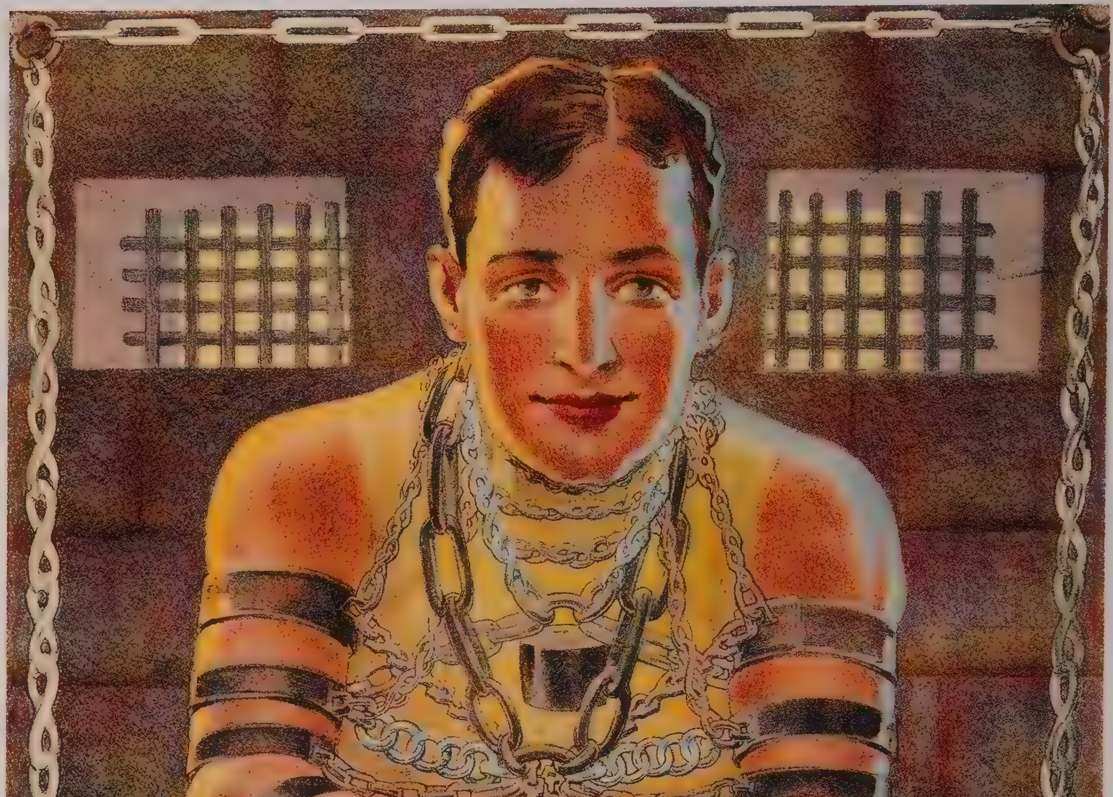
OPPOSITE: 1919 Houdini's daring escapes on the vaudeville stage made a perfect transition to the silent film serials. *The Master Mystery* featured Houdini as the indomitable hero who conquered every challenge. His mechanical villain, called "the automaton," was the very first movie robot. It appeared three years before the word *robot* was coined.

BELOW: ca. 1919 Houdini's Hollywood career combined his escapes with daring stunts to thrill the audience and further the elaborate cloak-and-dagger plots. Here he is trussed in a special straitjacket of canvas and leather, and perched on the edge of a building. Any squirming or twisting could guarantee a fatal fall!

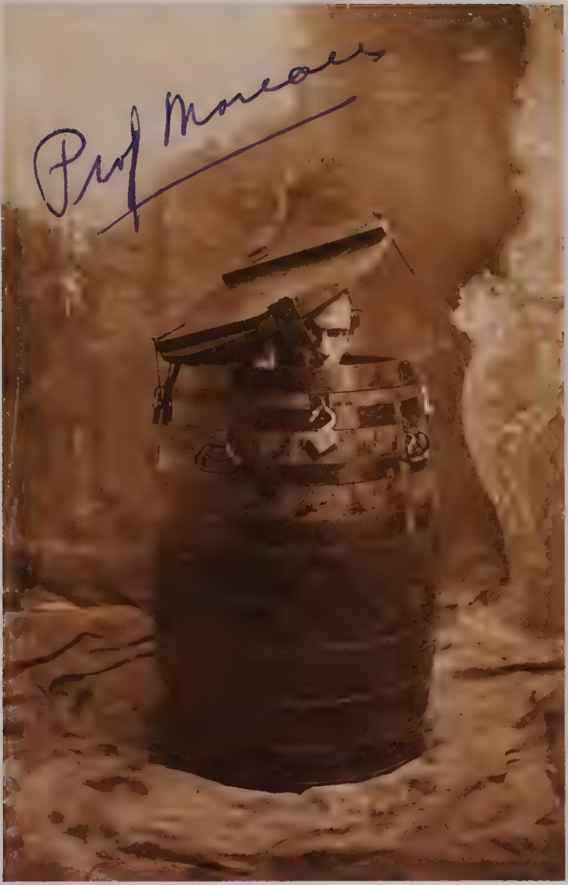



OVER THE EDGE — WITH DEATH BELOW AND IMPRISONMENT ABOVE!


B.A. ROLFE PRESENTS
HOUDINI
IN
The MASTER MYSTERY
BY ARTHUR B. REEVE
AND CHARLES A. LOGUE
DIRECTED BY BURTON KING
OTIS LITHOGRAPH CO.
EPISODE EIGHT
B. A. ROLFE PRODUCTIONS
OCTAGON FILMS, INC.

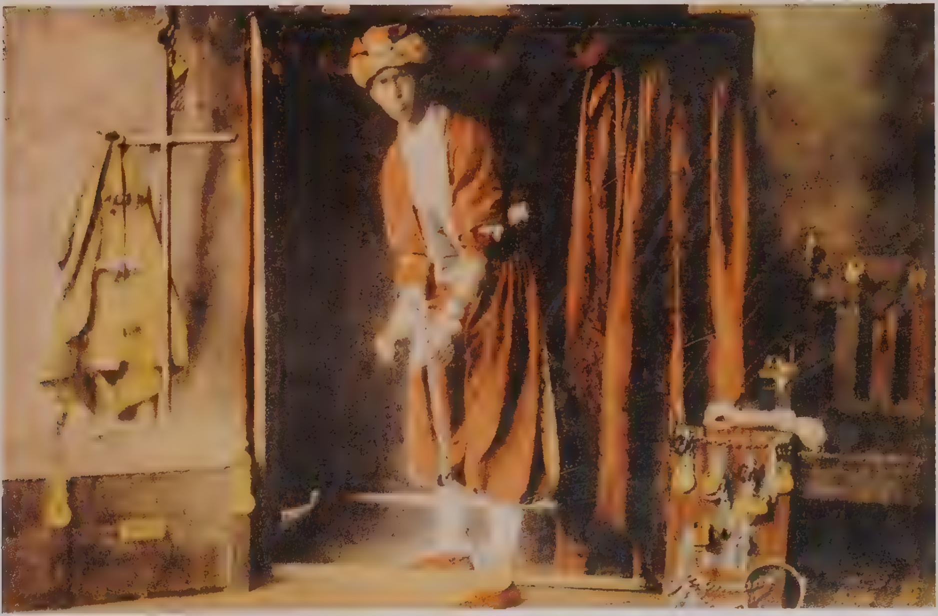

NO HANDCUFF OR SHACKLE,
PRISON CELL OR LOCK CAN HOLD ME
National

ABOVE: **ca. 1932** Before Harry Houdini, the category "escape artist" didn't exist. But his success inspired dozens of imitators. The National Poster Company of New York City even printed this "stock" poster of an escape artist, a general image that could be purchased in quantity and imprinted with a performer's name.

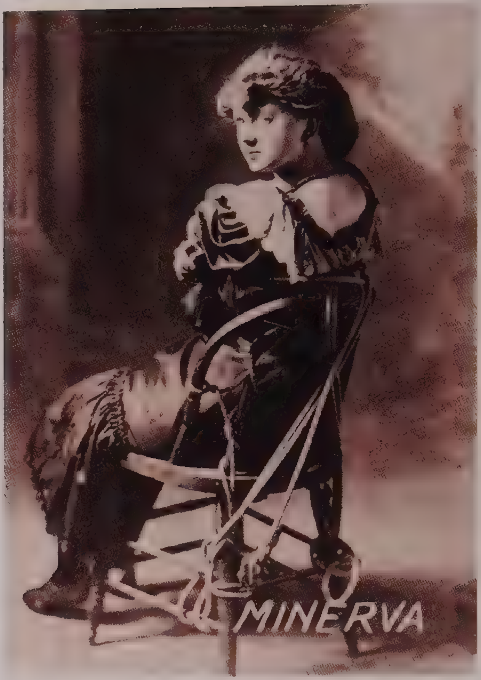


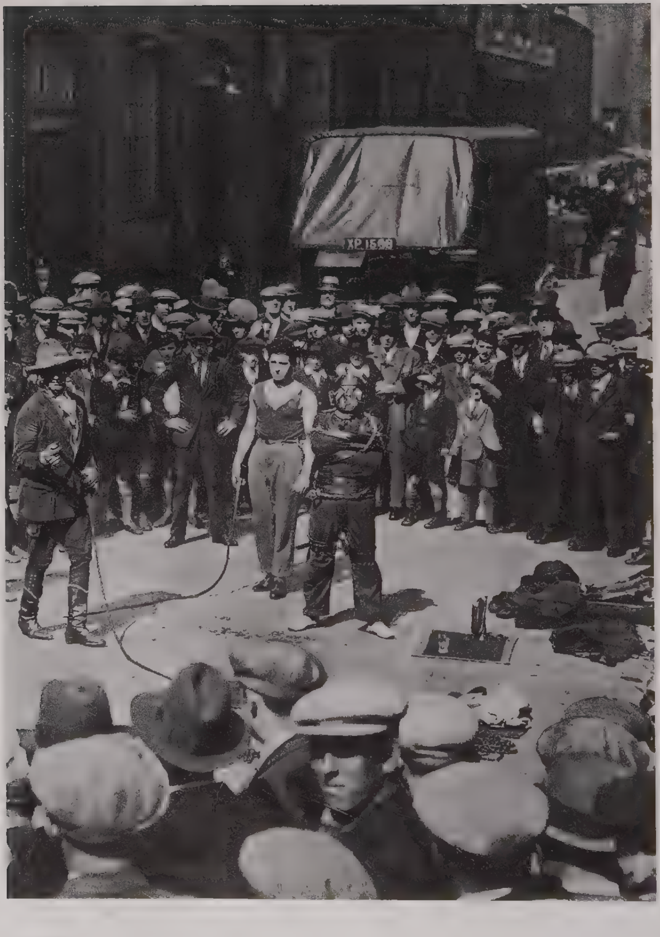
LEFT: **ca. 1915** Professor Moreau was a Minnesota magician who followed the fashion of the day and added a barrel escape to his repertoire. Magic shops and dealers in magicians' apparatus sold copies of Houdini's feats to satisfy the demands of amateur and professional escape artists.

BELOW: **ca. 1918** Jarah Ho Tyahma was the exotic stage name of the Lowell, Massachusetts, escape artist J. H. Trudel. In this unusual hand-tinted photo, he displays the traditional apparatus, including a straitjacket and handcuffs. In later years, Trudel manufactured special apparatus for escape artists.



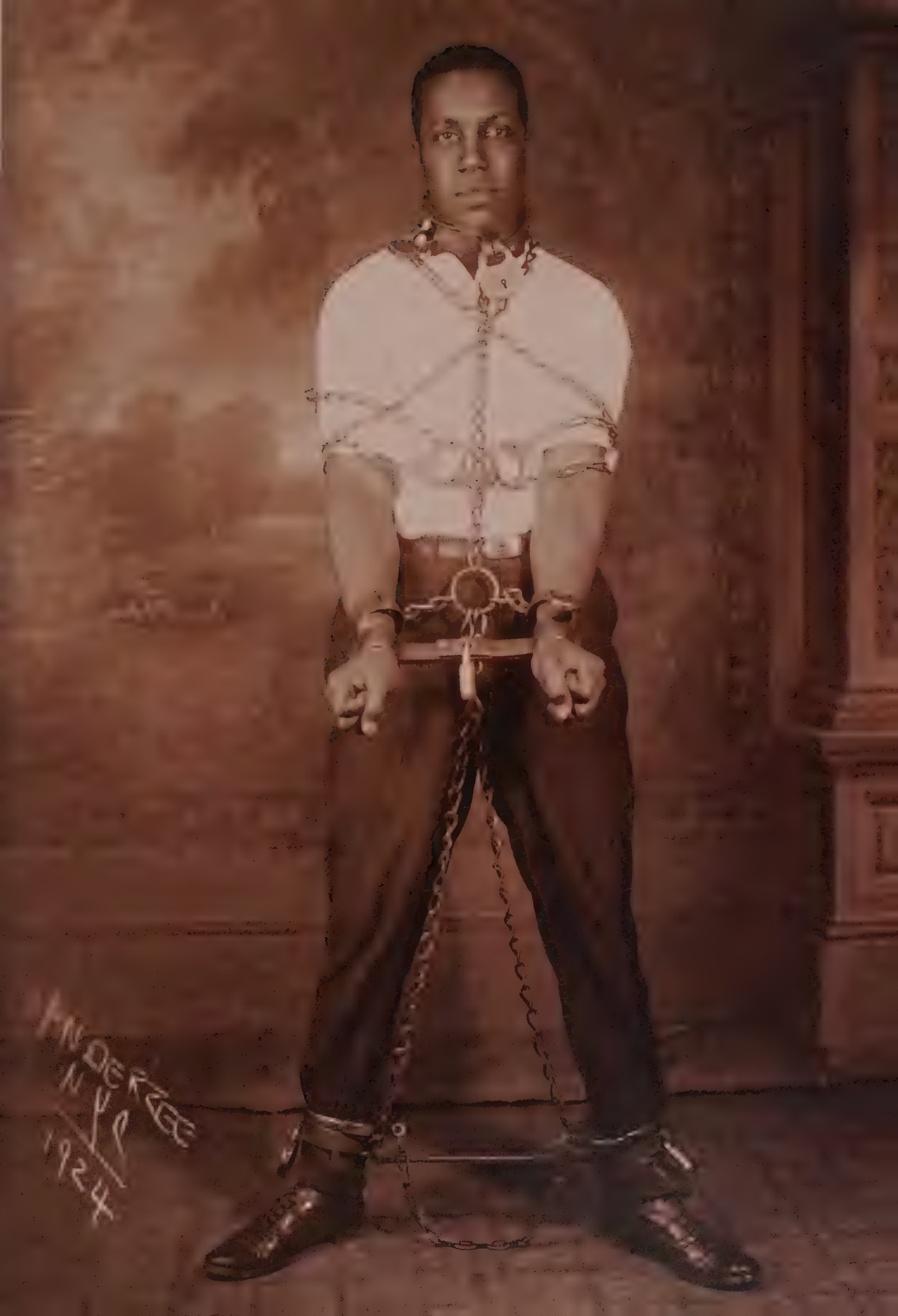
RIGHT: **ca. 1910** Houdini's most interesting competitors were several female escape artists. Minerva was Mrs. Minerva Riedel Van Dorn, born in Germany, raised in England, and taught escapes by her first husband, William Van Dorn, who appeared as Vano. She jumped from bridges while wearing handcuffs, mastered the straitjacket escape, and specialized in an escape from a locked barrel filled with water.





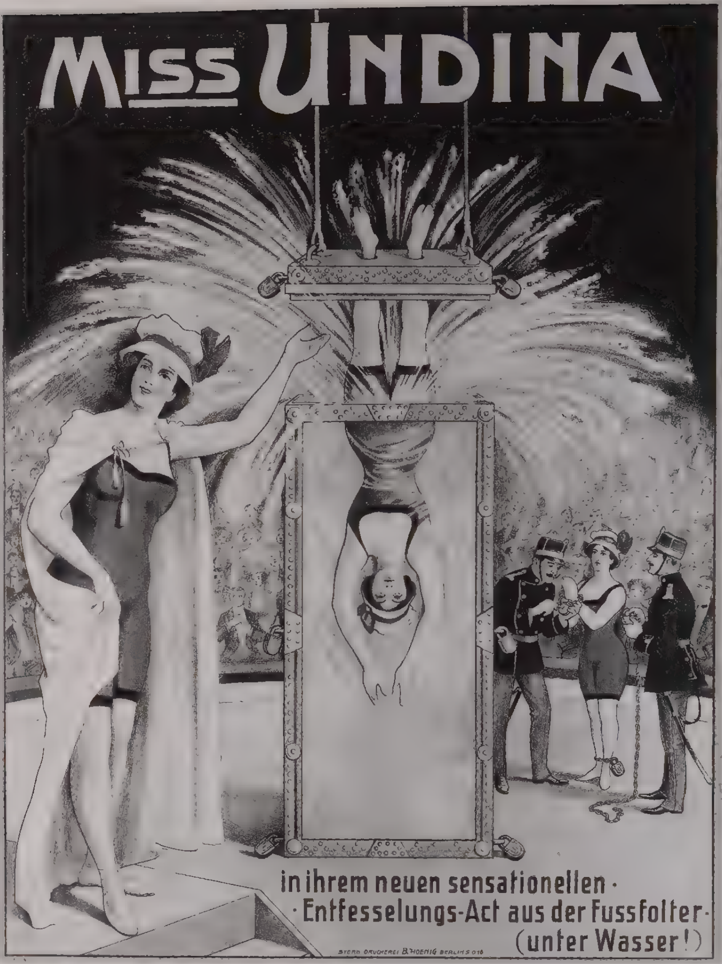
LEFT: **1927** A London street performance by an unknown escape artist offers an odd mixture of whips, chains, a mask, and a straitjacket. These sorts of thrills were guaranteed to draw a crowd. As the victim began his gyrations, wriggling free of his bonds, his histrionic efforts inspired plenty of tossed coins.

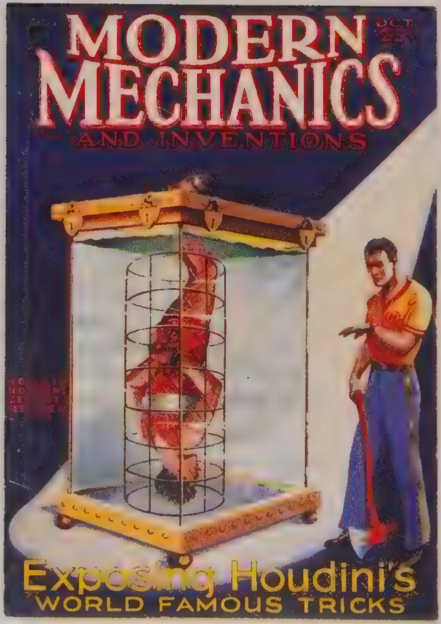
OPPOSITE: **1924** The Black Houdini, a vaudeville performer also billed as Wonderful Williams, was photographed by Harlem photographer James VanDerZee. Originally, the performer suggested posing with chains, as if at the end of an escape, but VanDerZee realized that the man in chains was a more dramatic image. Just a half century after the abolishment of slavery in the United States, a black escape act provided chilling symbolism for the audience.


M. DeREGGE
N.Y.C.
1924

RIGHT: **1912** Houdini's tour of Germany inspired a number of brazen imitations. Two German impresarios hired a daring young woman to present an effective copy of the Water Torture Cell. Her real name isn't recorded, but her stage name, Undina, was a brilliant choice. Undine was the name of a mythical water nymph, and Undina sounded, to the casual listener, like Houdini. Houdini filed court papers and stopped the performance.

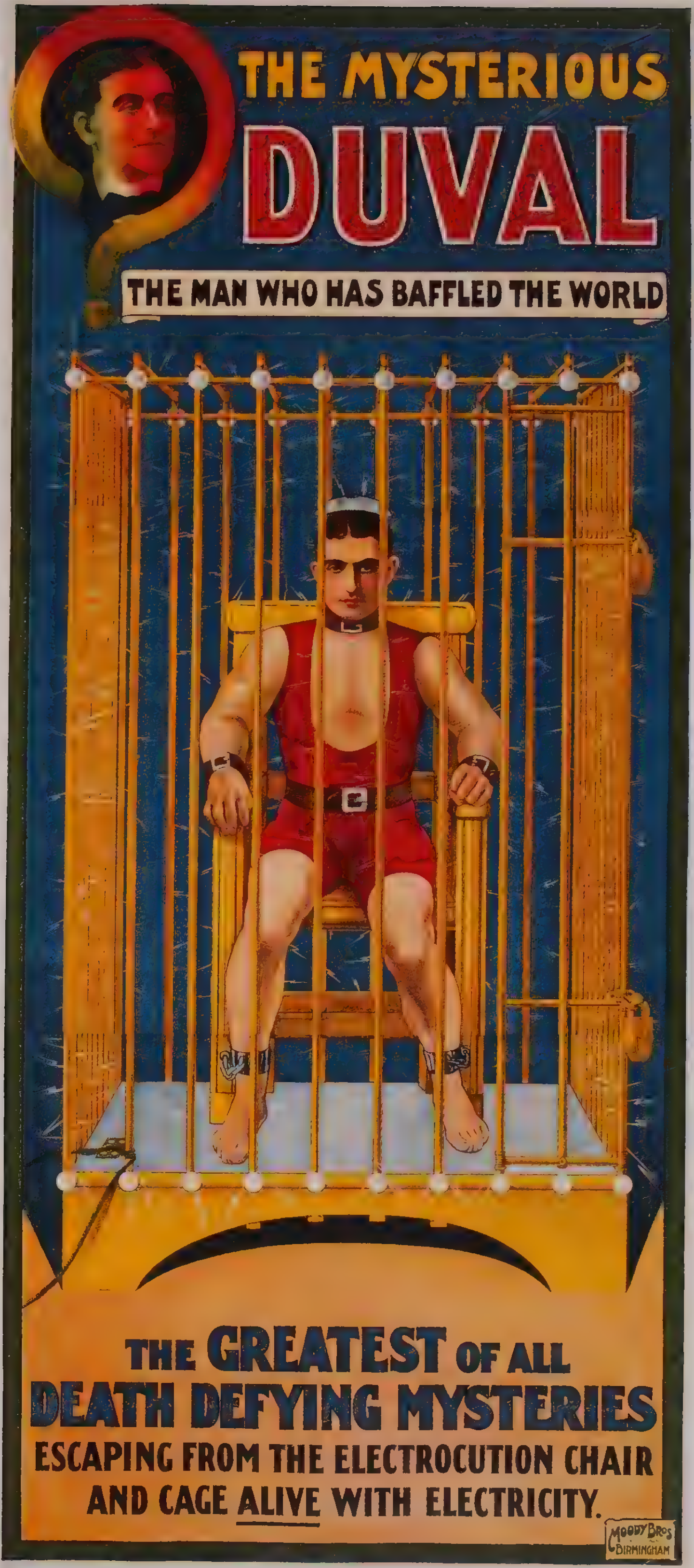
PAGES 454–455: **1926** A beautiful stock poster of Sawing a Lady in Half was intended to be used by performers who couldn't afford to have custom lithographs designed and printed. In the artist's conception, this popular illusion becomes an ancient miracle, the work of a mysterious Chinese wizard. In fact, different versions of this illusion originated in England and America.


MISS UNDINA
in ihrem neuen sensationellen ·
· Entfesselungs-Act aus der Fussfolter ·
(unter Wasser!)
STERN DRUCKEREI B. HOENIG BERLIN S O 16

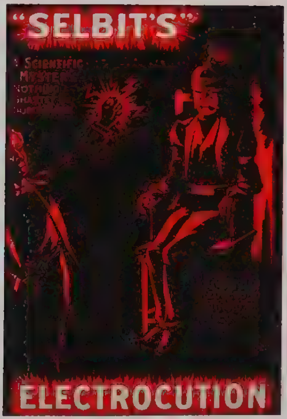

MODERN MECHANICS
AND INVENTIONS
OCT. 25¢
Exposing Houdini's
WORLD FAMOUS TRICKS

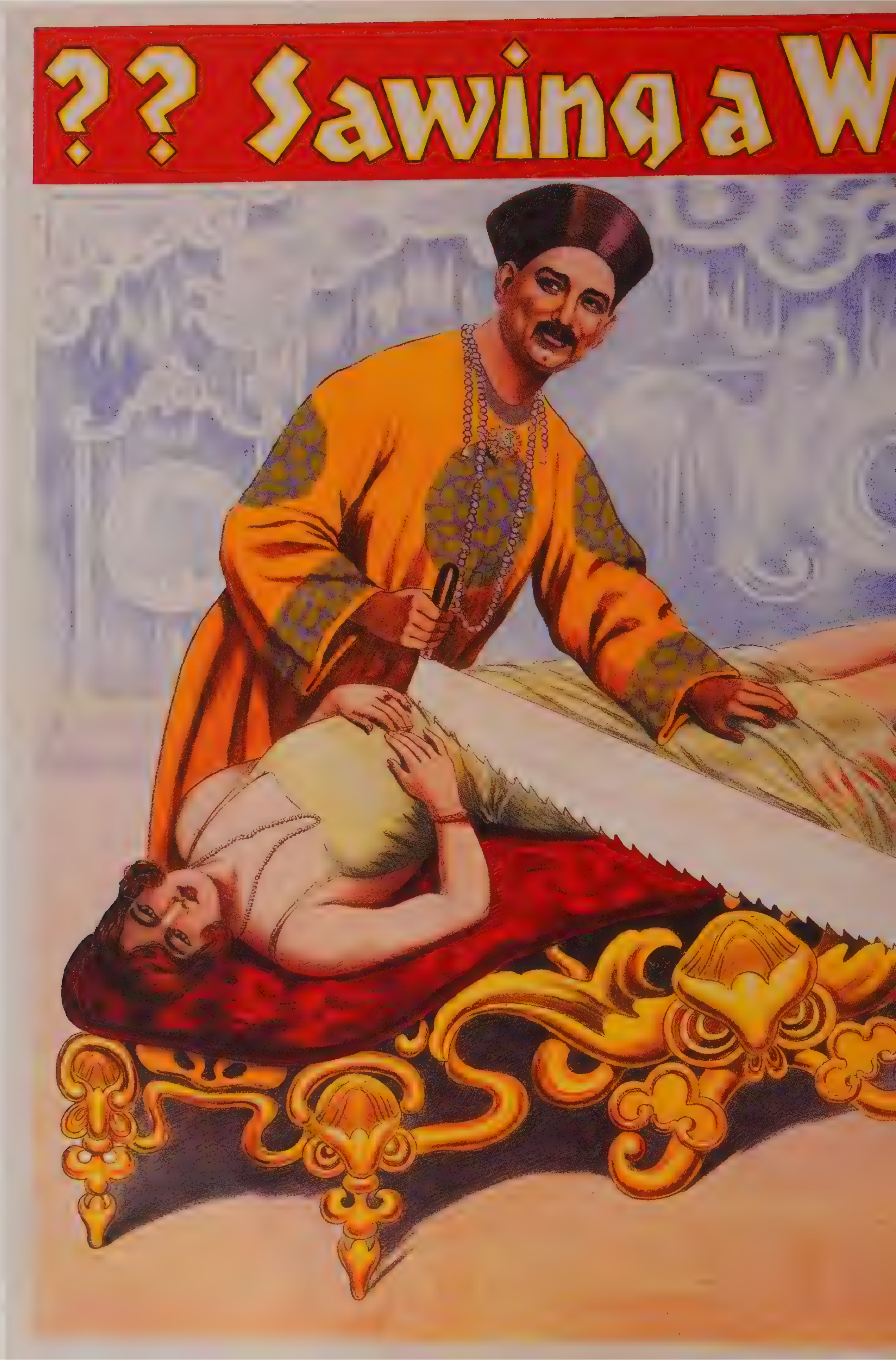
LEFT: **1929** Houdini's apparatus was not destroyed upon his death, but inherited by his younger brother, the escape artist Theo Weiss, also known as Hardeen. Over many decades, books and magazines have speculated about Houdini's techniques. For example, the actual secret of his famous Water Torture Cell, a simple mechanical device, has appeared only once or twice in print. It is effectively hidden beneath hundreds of fanciful accounts and erroneous explanations and diagrams.

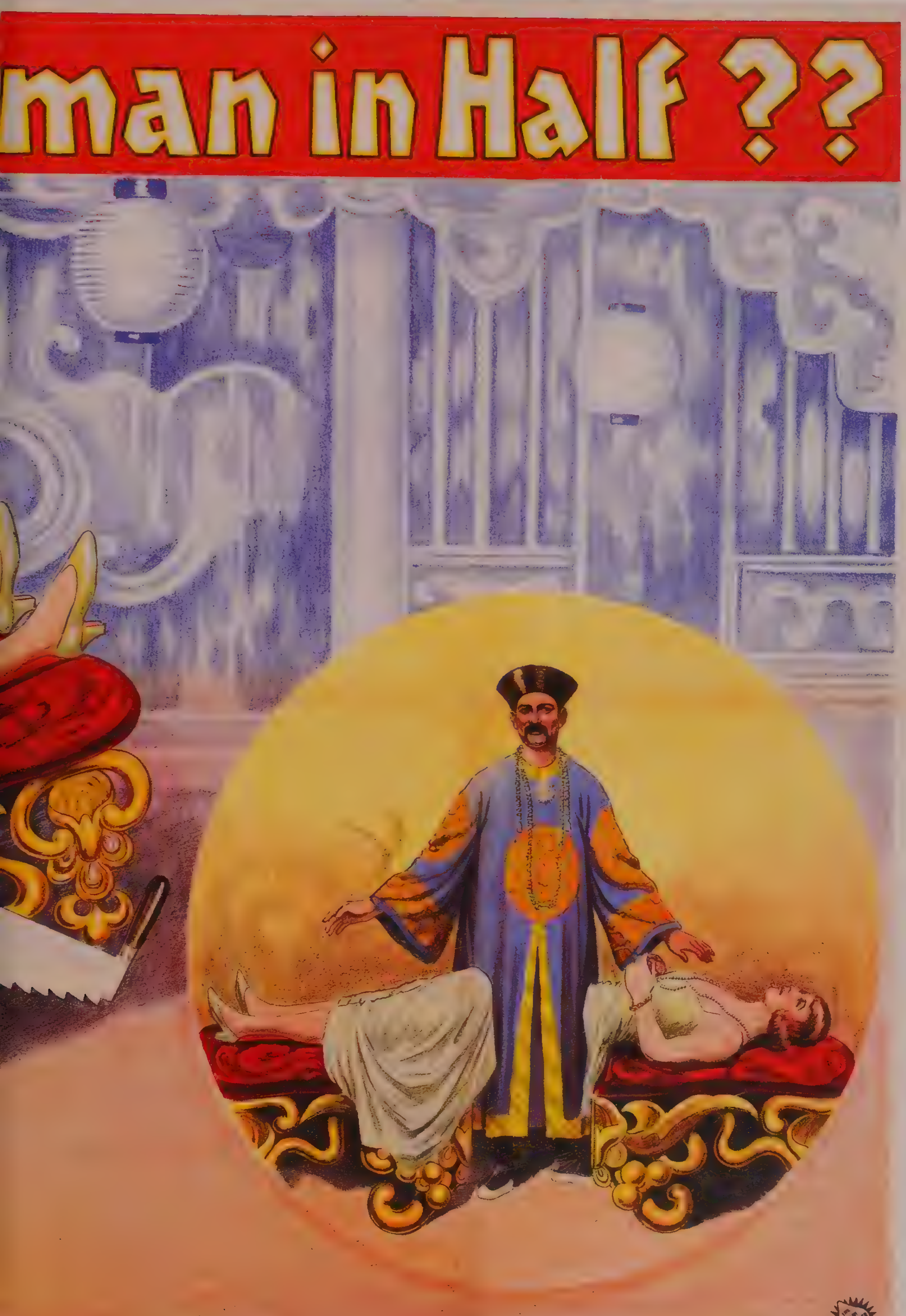
RIGHT: **ca. 1912** Duval was a Houdini imitator from South Africa who found success in England. In one escape, he was strapped to an electric chair and surrounded by an electrified metal cage. His audiences had read accounts of the terrifying electric chair that was used for executions in the United States. It was an irresistible lure for his music-hall patrons.


THE MYSTERIOUS
DUVAL
THE MAN WHO HAS BAFFLED THE WORLD
THE GREATEST OF ALL
DEATH DEFYING MYSTERIES
ESCAPING FROM THE ELECTROCUTION CHAIR
AND CAGE ALIVE WITH ELECTRICITY.
MOODY BROS
BIRMINGHAM

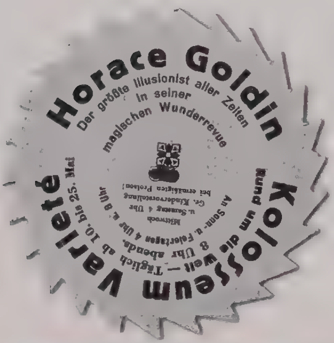
BELOW: **ca. 1908** An early P. T. Selbit illusion capitalized on the public's interest in the electric chair. The man was strapped in the chair and concealed from view. When the switch was thrown, he disappeared. Despite the horrific appeal of the poster, the caption boasts that it is purely "A Scientific Mystery, Nothing Ghastly or Objectionable."

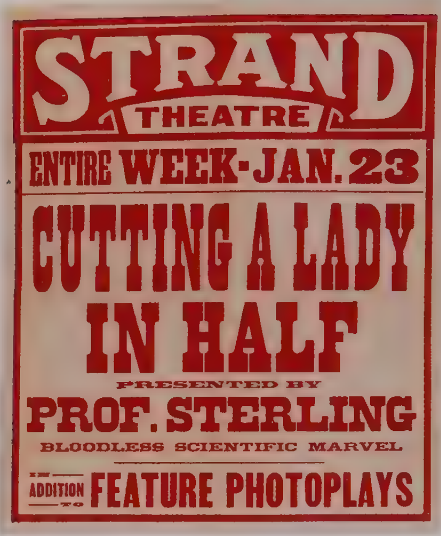

"SELBIT'S"
ELECTROCUTION


?? Sawing a W


man in Half ??
7935

BELOW: **ca. 1932** During an appearance in Germany, Horace Goldin promoted his latest sawing-in-half illusion, the Living Miracle, by distributing cardboard circular saws. His dramatic poster for the illusion, bottom, showed the ubiquitous saw descending upon its victim. This illusion became a trademark for the magician.


Horace Goldin
Der größte Illusionist aller Zeiten
in seiner
magischen Wunderrevue
Rund um die Welt
Kolosseum Varieté
Täglich ab 10. bis 25. Mai
8 Uhr abends. An Sonn- u. Feiertagen 4 Uhr u. 8 Uhr
Mittwoch u. Samstag 4 Uhr
Gr. Kindervorstellung
bei ermäßigten Preisen!



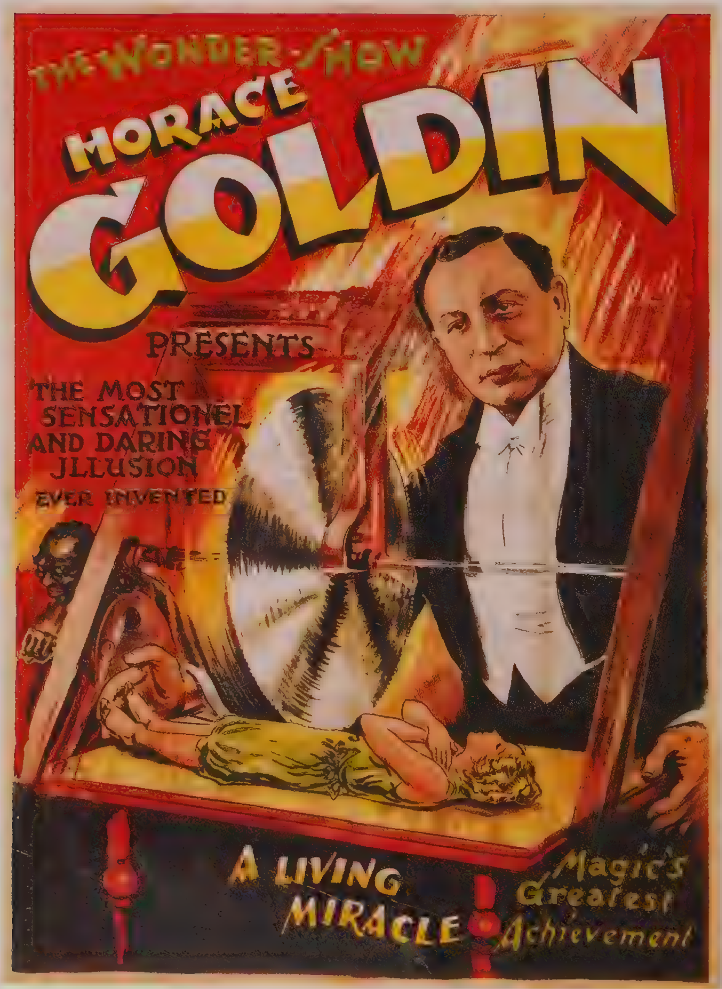
STRAND
THEATRE

ENTIRE WEEK-JAN. 23

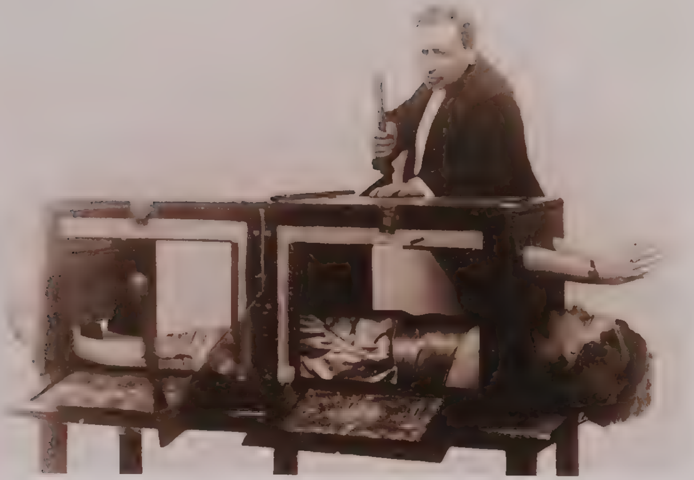
CUTTING A LADY
IN HALF

PRESENTED BY
PROF. STERLING
BLOODLESS SCIENTIFIC MARVEL

IN ADDITION TO FEATURE PHOTOPLAYS

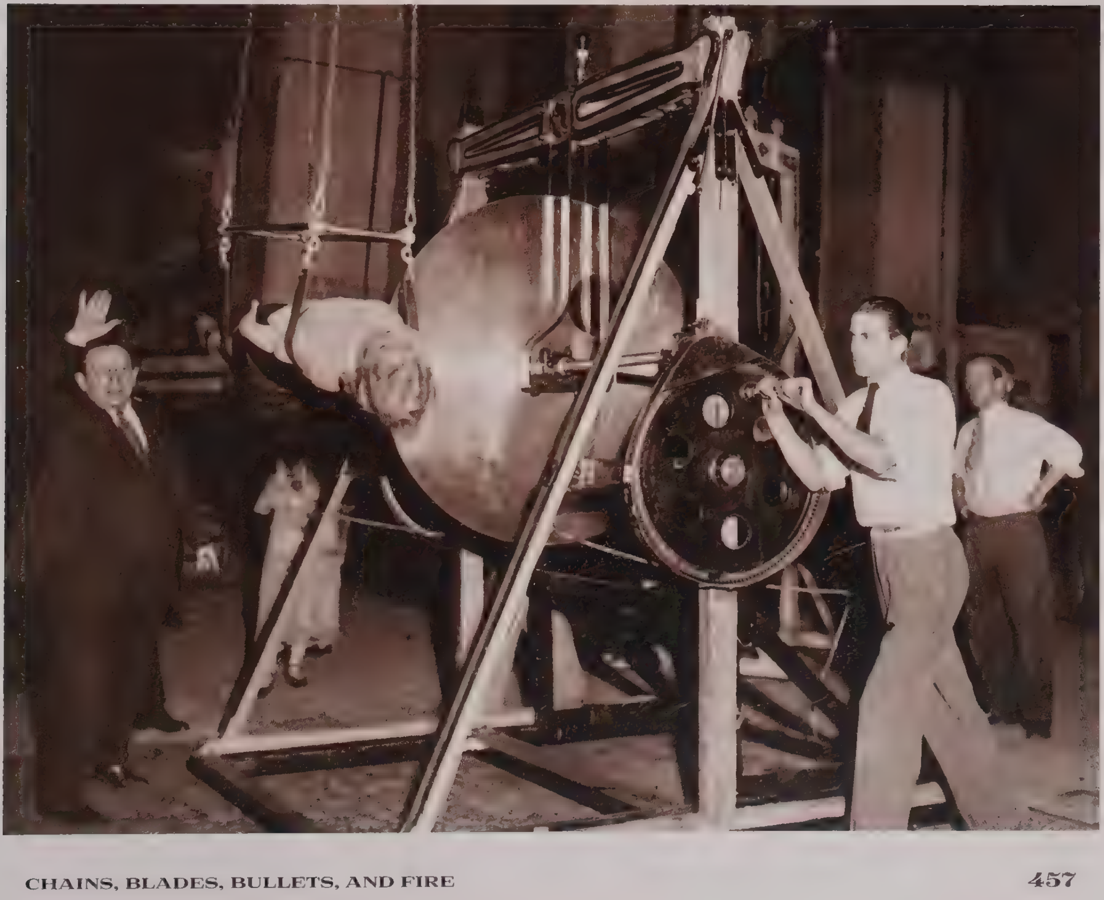

THE WONDER-SHOW
HORACE
GOLDIN
PRESENTS
THE MOST
SENSATIONEL
AND DARING
JLLUSION
EVER INVENTED
A LIVING
MIRACLE
Magic's
Greatest
Achievement

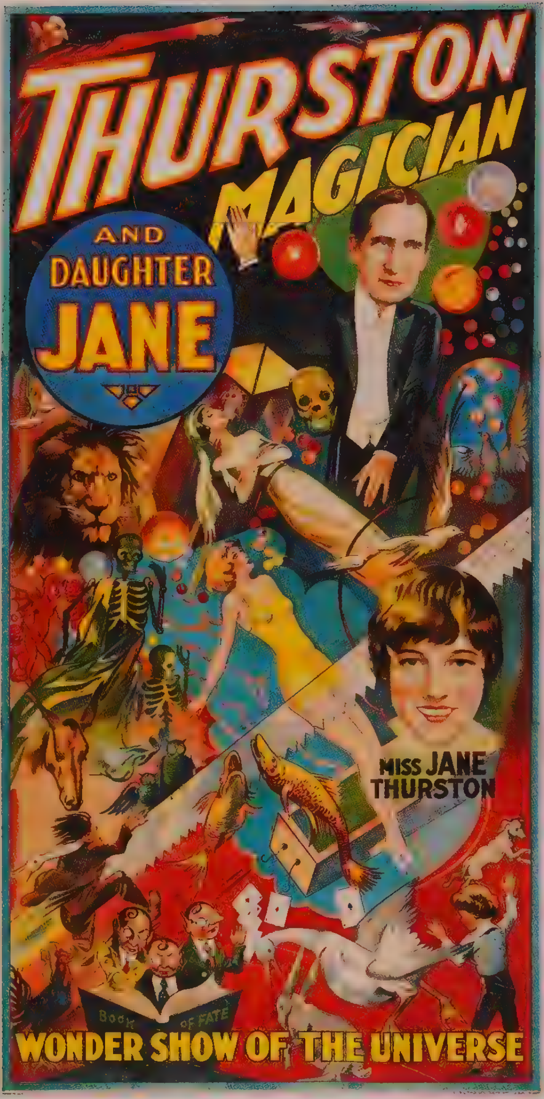
ABOVE: **1922** By the end of 1921, sawing-in-half illusions were a hit with audiences across the United States. Dozens of magicians quickly hammered together weird tables, cabinets, and boxes to accomplish the trick. Professor Sterling was a small-time magician and mind reader, but by January 1922, he knew what his audiences wanted to see.



ABOVE: **1921** Horace Goldin heard of P. T. Selbit's success in London, and quickly put together his own Sawing a Lady in Half illusion. In Goldin's very different version, the woman's head, hands, and feet projected from the ends of the cabinet, rather than being hidden inside of it. This is a publicity photo, showing the open doors of the cabinet. During an actual performance, the woman's body was concealed as the sawing proceeded.

BELOW: **ca. 1932** A decade later, Goldin introduced the Living Miracle, an improved version of the sawing-in-half illusion. He used an enormous circular saw to divide the woman. No longer did he use a box to cover her. The blade now cleanly sliced through her body, providing a visceral, horrific effect. Goldin stands to the left in the photo, hand above his head, about to start the illusion.

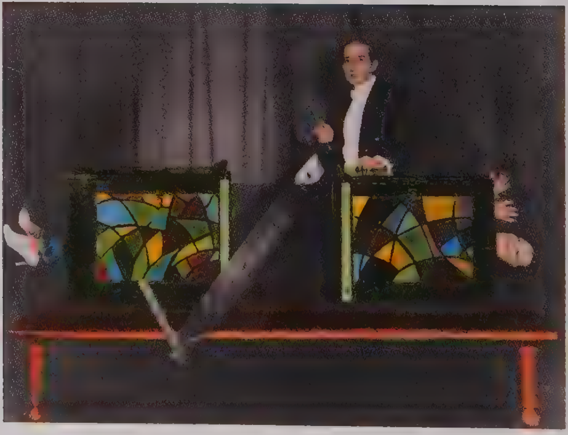


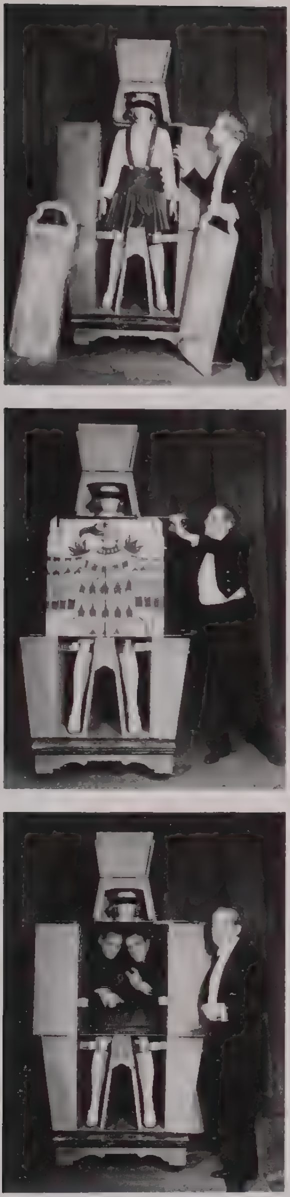


LEFT: **ca. 1930** At the end of the 1920s, Howard Thurston's show boasted dozens of large-scale illusions and his daughter, Jane—his singing, tap-dancing magic costar. This colorful poster also features a saw, representing the popular Sawing a Lady in Half illusion. The illusion was presented, according to Thurston's program, "By Public Request."

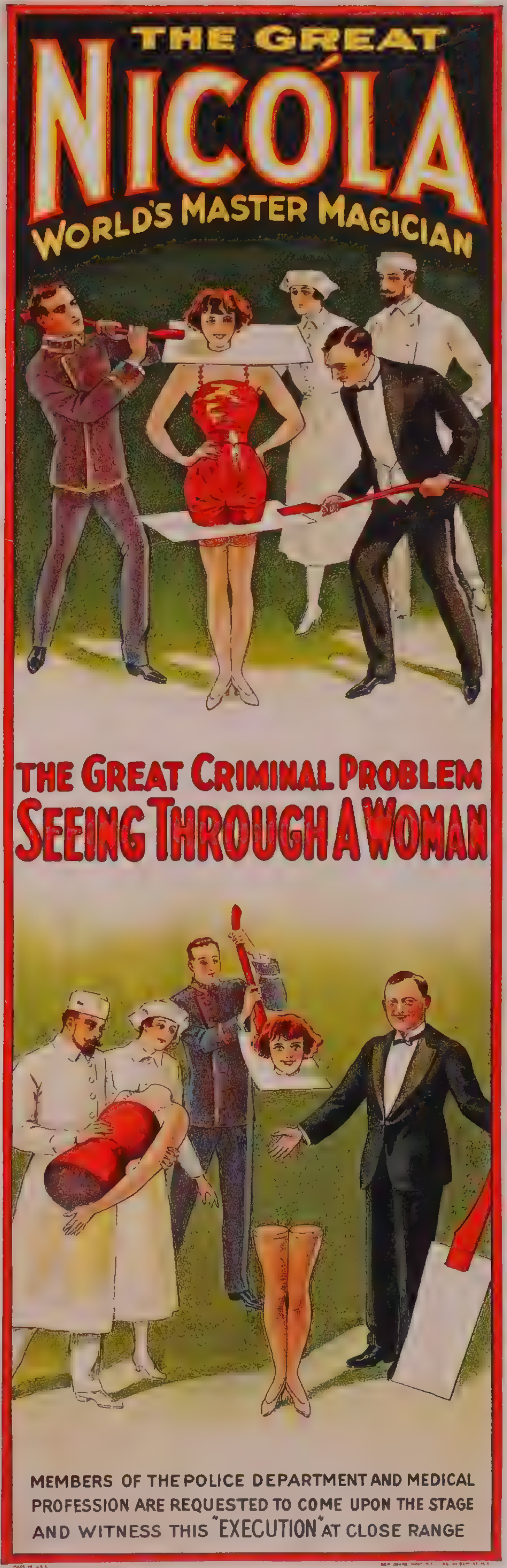
OPPOSITE RIGHT: **ca. 1926** Nicola performed Selbit's Man Without a Middle using a female assistant. It was an amazing mystery onstage. But on the poster, it became a miracle. The artist eliminated the sarcophagus-shaped box that surrounded the woman, giving the impression that she would be sliced apart in full view of the audience. The artist even made Nicola more handsome!

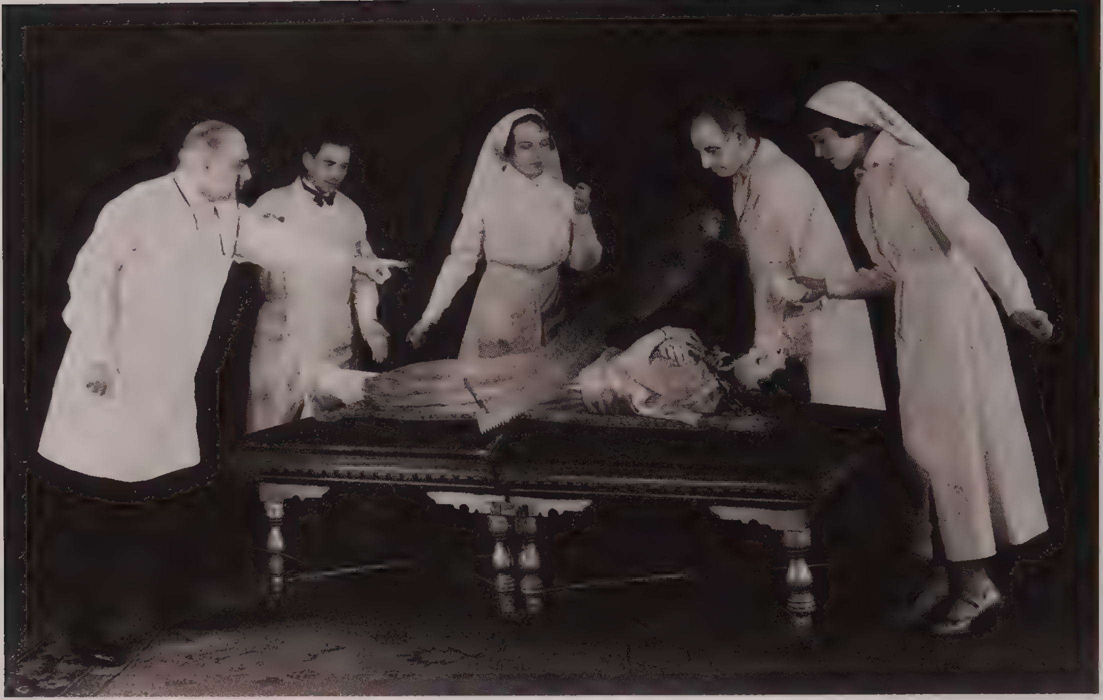
RIGHT: **ca. 1923** Thurston is shown posing with his sawing apparatus. This is the illusion the audience would have seen during a performance. The magician invited a committee of spectators to examine the apparatus and supervise the entire procedure. They held the hands and feet of the woman; when the saw reached her body and she let out a scream, many spectators ran from the stage in terror!



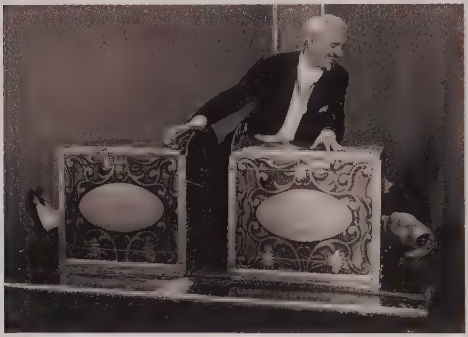


ABOVE: **ca. 1930** Seeing Through a Lady followed the success of the sawing-in-half illusion. It was inspired by P. T. Selbit's illusion the Man Without a Middle and invented by Carl Owen. Thurston used an upright cabinet shaped like a sarcophagus. The assistant was sliced into three pieces using two large metal blades, and then her body disappeared. Two of Thurston's assistants peer through the cabinet from the back.


THE GREAT
NICÓLA
WORLD'S MASTER MAGICIAN
THE GREAT CRIMINAL PROBLEM
SEEING THROUGH A WOMAN
MEMBERS OF THE POLICE DEPARTMENT AND MEDICAL PROFESSION ARE REQUESTED TO COME UPON THE STAGE AND WITNESS THIS "EXECUTION" AT CLOSE RANGE

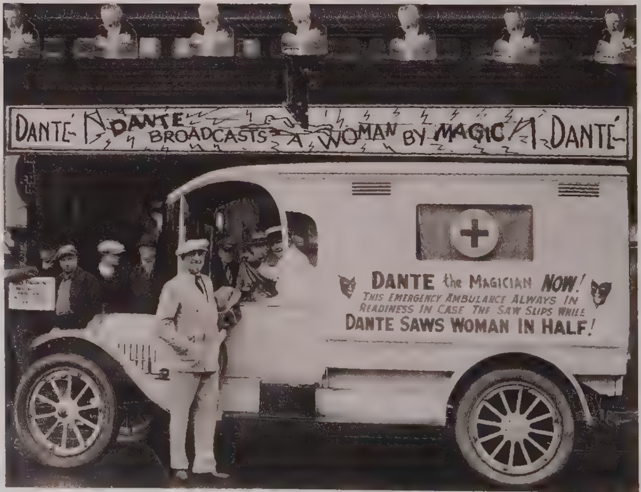


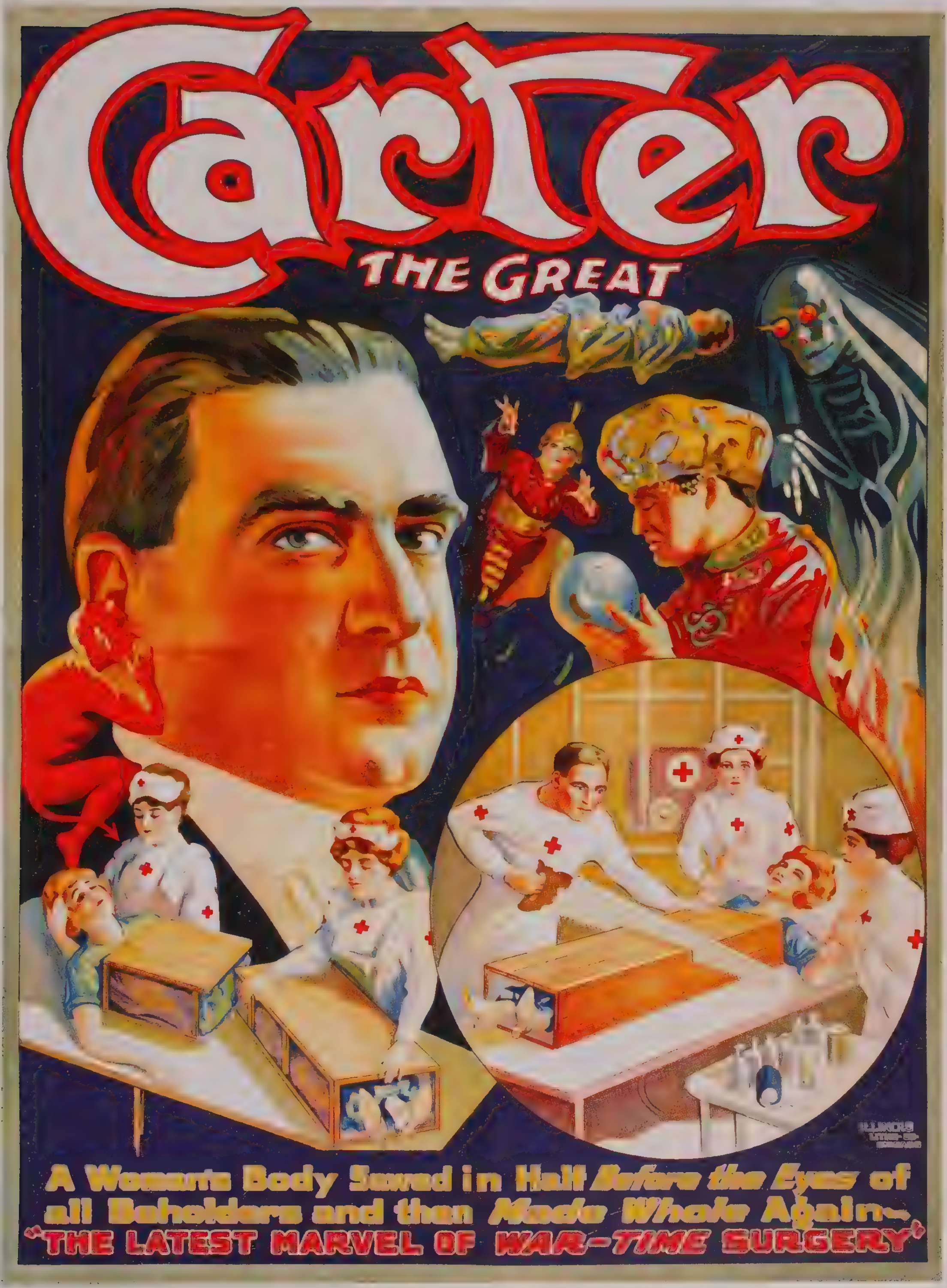
ABOVE: **ca. 1926** American magician Charles Carter couldn't resist adding the sawing-in-half illusion to his shows. He stands at the left, directing his assistants. The photo is purely for publicity. Actually, the woman was concealed within a large box when the sawing took place.

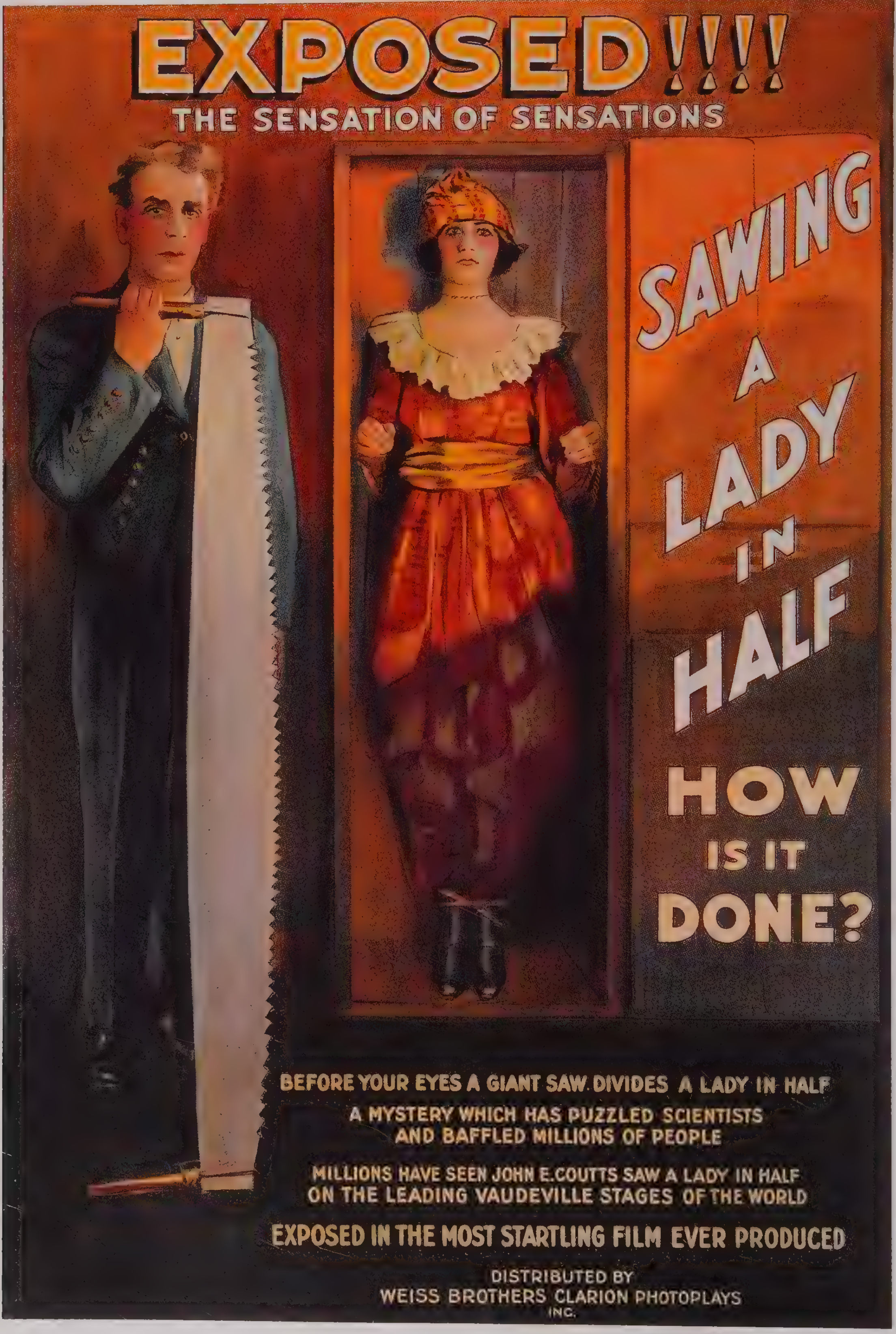


ABOVE AND RIGHT: **ca. 1923** Harry Jansen, who performed under the name Dante, built the sawing apparatus for Howard Thurston. It became a feature in Dante's show as well. Above, he has just completed the operation, and pulls apart the halves of the woman. The trick was promoted with grisly publicity stunts, such as the ambulance, right, parked outside the theater.

OPPOSITE: **1922** Carter realized that the illusion was especially chilling if his assistants wore doctors' and nurses' uniforms, giving the illusion the feeling of a medical emergency. His dramatic and lurid nine-foot-tall poster deliberately exaggerated the operation and simplified the appearance of the apparatus.


DANTE DANTE BROADCASTS A WOMAN BY MAGIC DANTE
DANTE the MAGICIAN NOW!
THIS EMERGENCY AMBULANCE ALWAYS IN READINESS IN CASE THE SAW SLIPS WHILE
DANTE SAWS WOMAN IN HALF!


Carter
THE GREAT
ILLINOIS
LITHO CO.
A Woman's Body Sawed in Half Before the Eyes of all Beholders and then Made Whole Again—
"THE LATEST MARVEL OF WAR-TIME SURGERY"



EXPOSED!!!!

THE SENSATION OF SENSATIONS

SAWING A LADY IN HALF

HOW IS IT DONE?

BEFORE YOUR EYES A GIANT SAW DIVIDES A LADY IN HALF

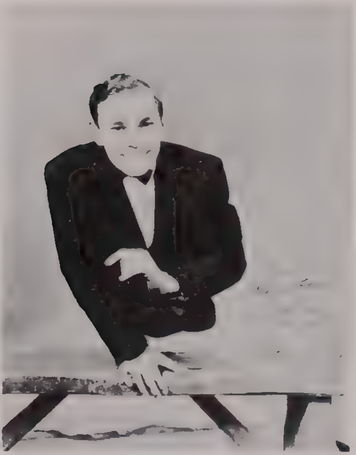
A MYSTERY WHICH HAS PUZZLED SCIENTISTS
AND BAFFLED MILLIONS OF PEOPLE

MILLIONS HAVE SEEN JOHN E. COUTTS SAW A LADY IN HALF
ON THE LEADING VAUDEVILLE STAGES OF THE WORLD

EXPOSED IN THE MOST STARTLING FILM EVER PRODUCED

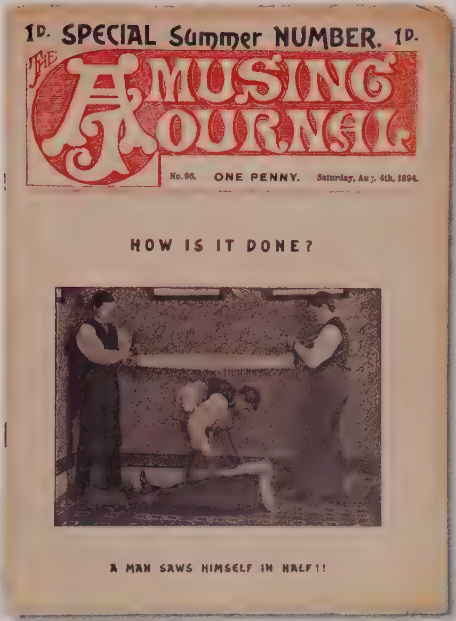
DISTRIBUTED BY
WEISS BROTHERS CLARION PHOTOPLAYS
INC.

LEFT AND BELOW: **1937 and 1953** Rajah Raboid presented the ultimate sawing-in-half illusion. A man stepped onto the stage and was placed in a large box. Raboid sawed him into two pieces, and then each half got up and dashed around the stage. The legs ran in one direction, and the top half of the man, propelling himself with his hands, ran in the other direction. Raboid's secret was Johnny Eck, a popular sideshow attraction, who appeared as a "half man." Eck was featured in Tod Browning's 1932 movie *Freaks*.



OPPOSITE: **1922** John E. Coutts, of Coutts and Tennis, was a minor magician before he agreed to have his version of Sawing a Lady in Half filmed, exposing the details of the effect. The film played briefly in 1922, but the clinical details of the deception seemed dull to audiences. Coutts was forgotten. Selbit, Goldin, Thurston, and Dante continued to draw audiences who wanted to be fooled.

RIGHT: **1894** The idea of sawing a man in half had existed years before P. T. Selbit's 1920 Sawing a Lady in Half illusion. French magician Jean Eugène Robert-Houdin described an apocryphal version of the trick in his 1858 book *Memoirs*. A clown act presented a comic version in a New York vaudeville show in the 1890s. This trick photo, though not intended as magic, was printed in 1894. What made Selbit's and, later, Goldin's versions so successful was the use of a woman. Somehow that simple change, ensuring melodramatic thrills—the woman in peril—captured the public's attention, propelling the illusion to fame.



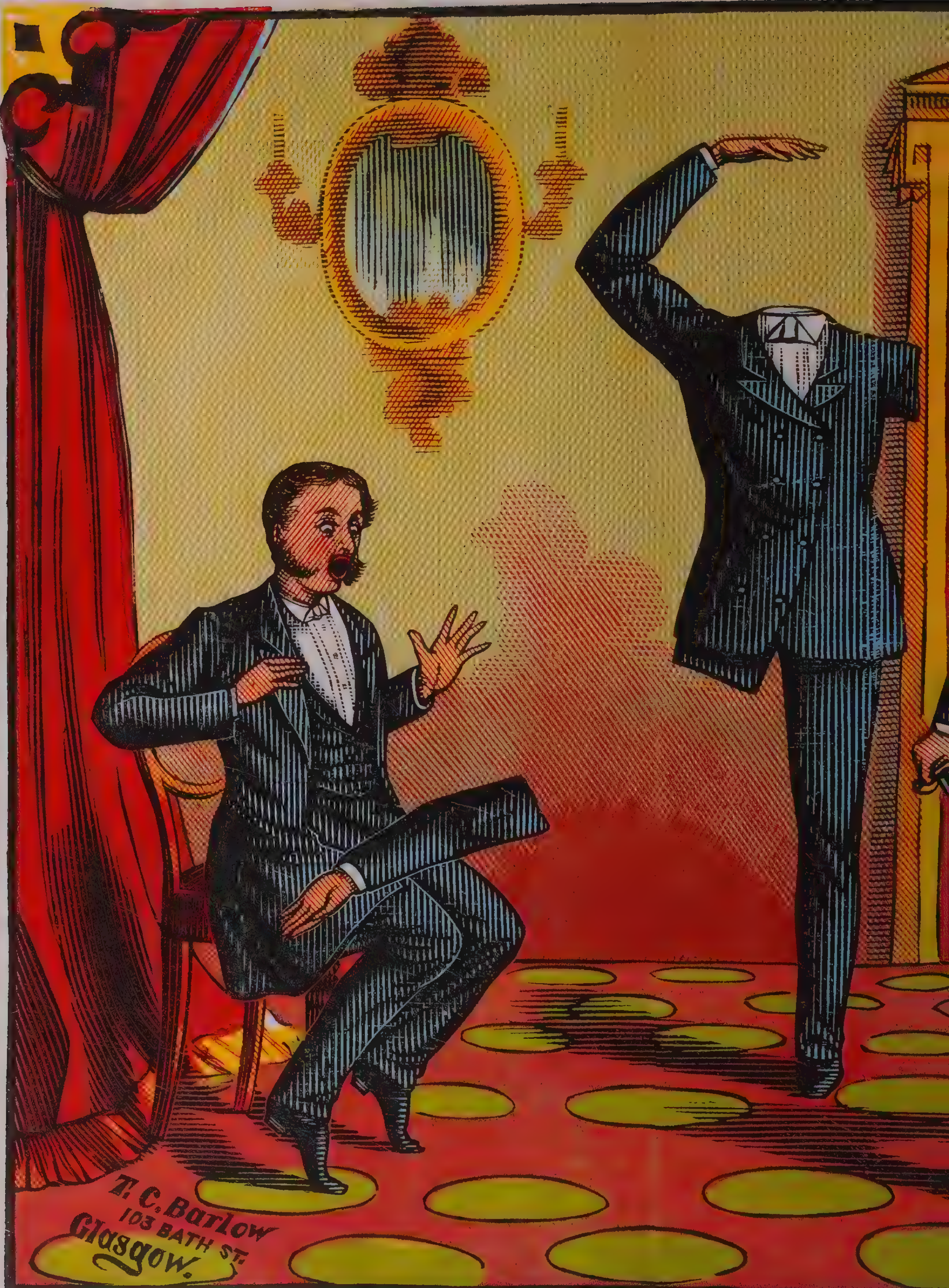
1D. SPECIAL Summer NUMBER. 1D.

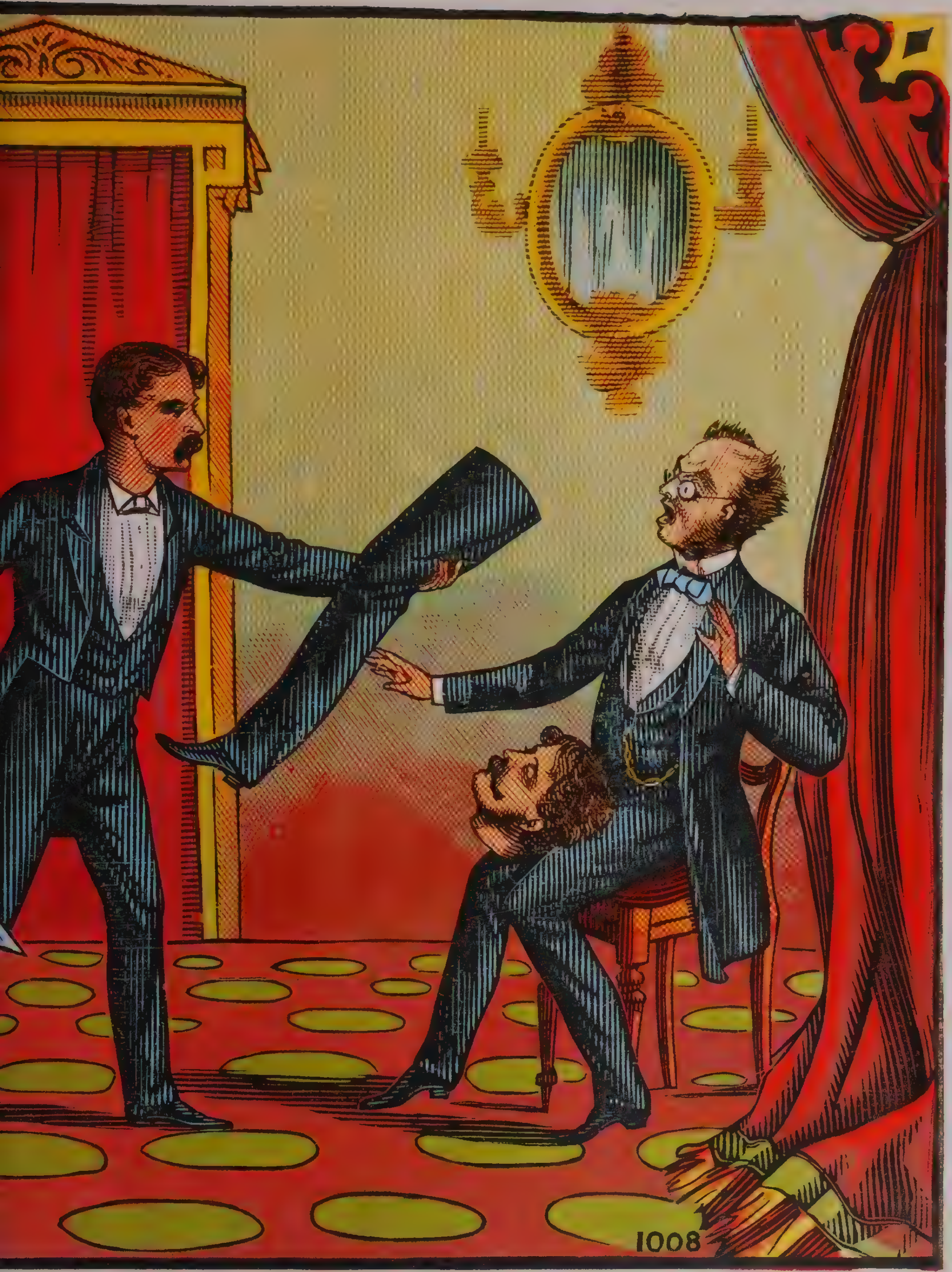
THE AMUSING JOURNAL

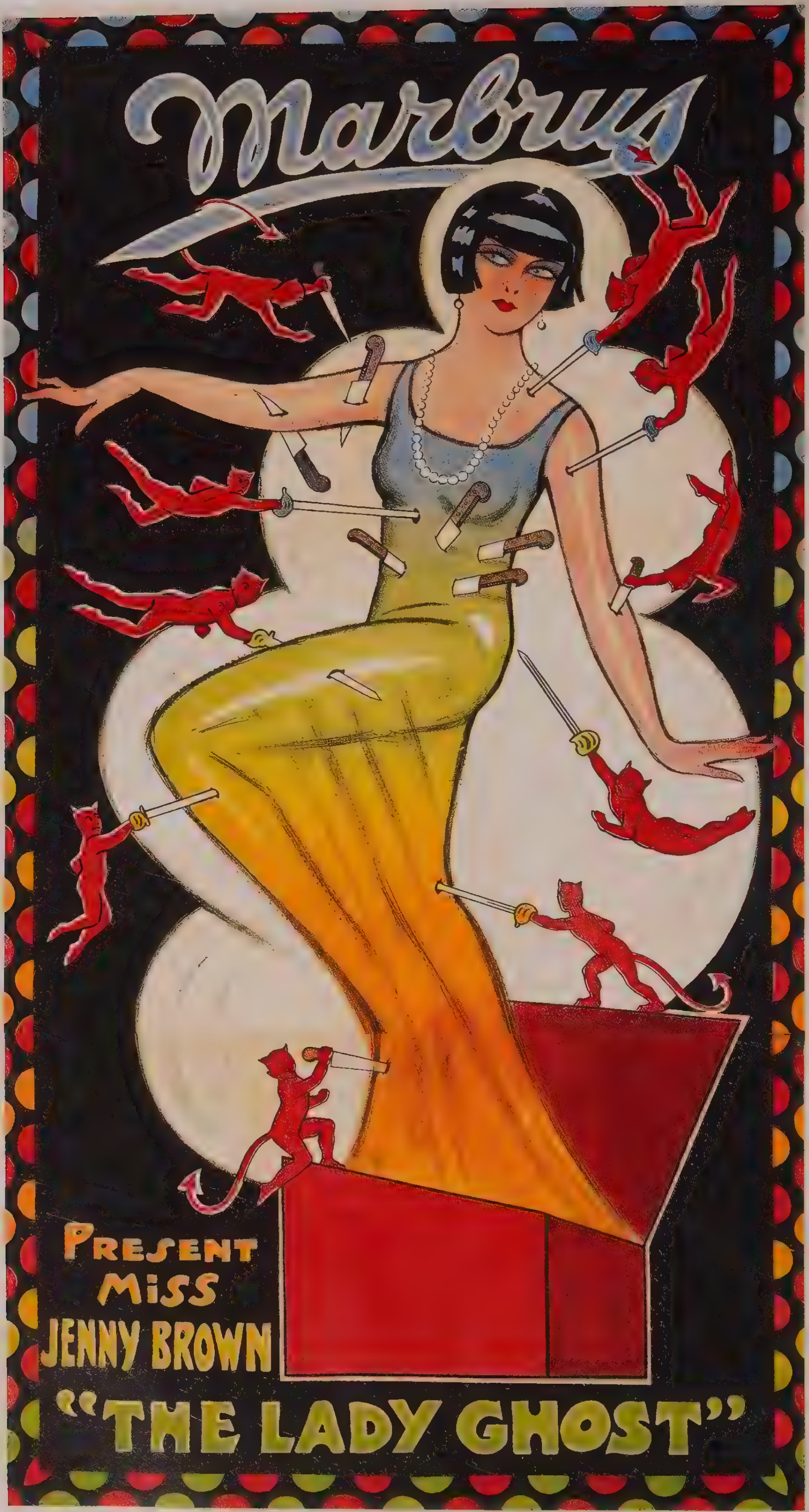
No. 96. ONE PENNY. Saturday, Aug. 4th, 1894.

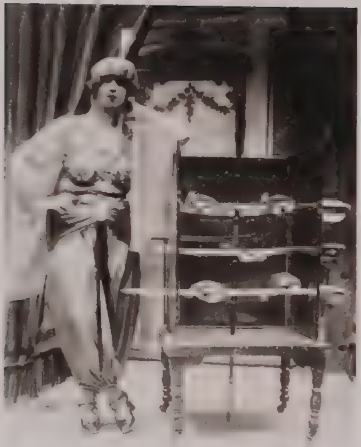
HOW IS IT DONE?

A MAN SAWS HIMSELF IN HALF!!


T. C. Barlow
103 Bath St.
Glasgow.

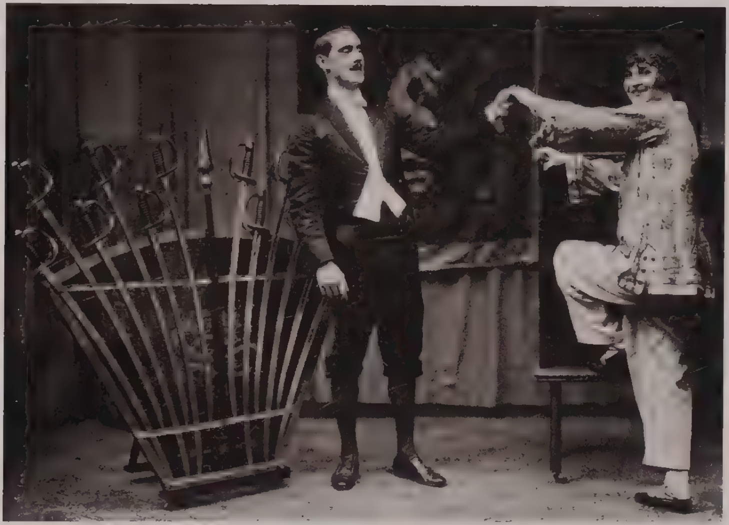

1008

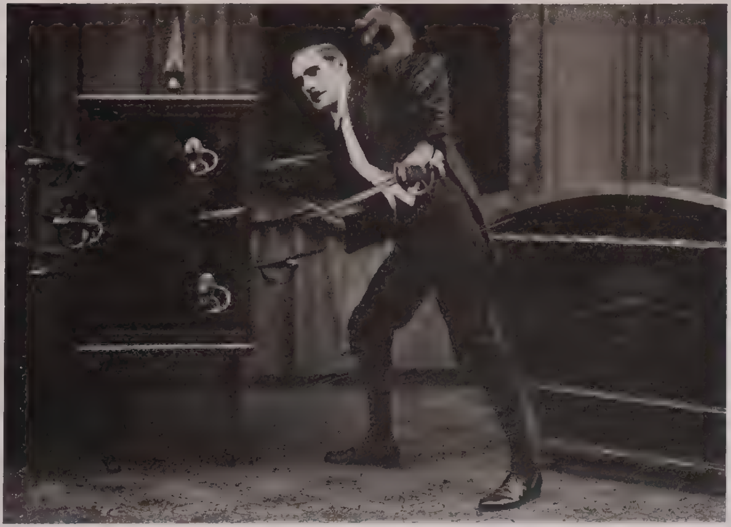

Marbrus
PRESENT
MISS
JENNY BROWN
"THE LADY GHOST"



LEFT: **ca. 1920** For this photograph, which advertised an unidentified performer, the tiny wooden sword box was deliberately stuffed with swords, blades, and sticks.

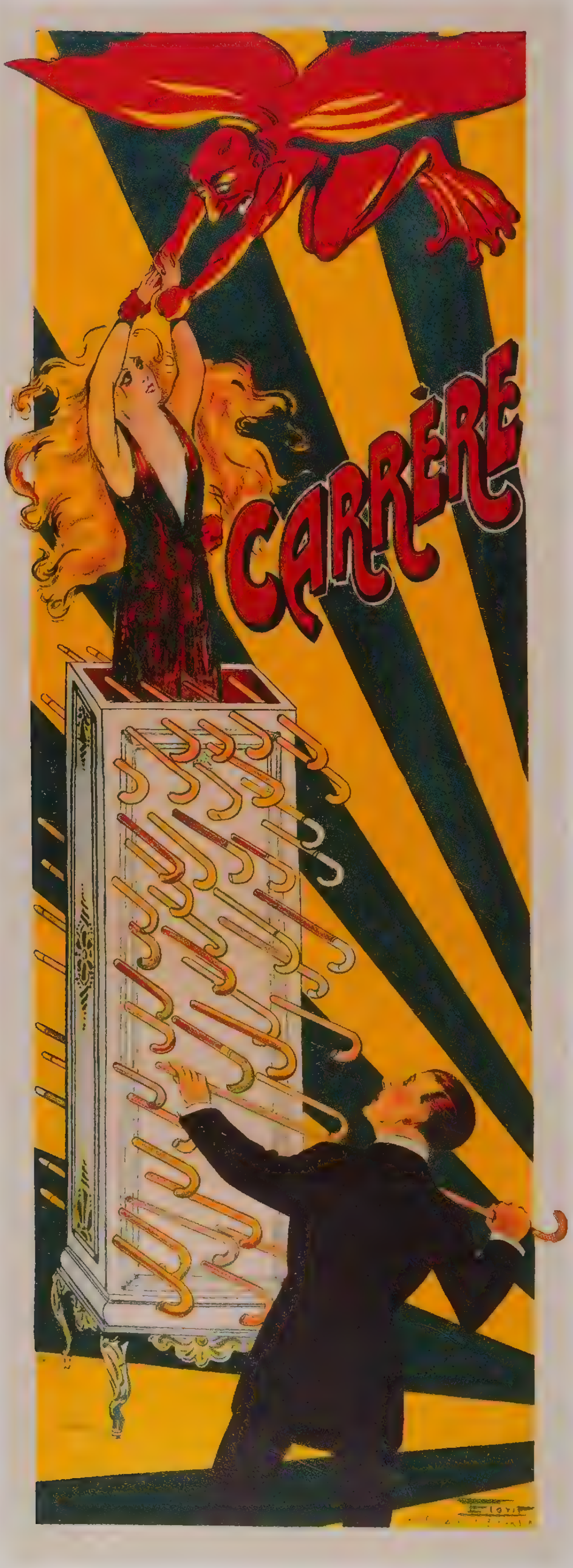
PAGES 464–465: **ca. 1875** Palingenesia was an illusion invented by British magician Thomas Tobin in 1872 and performed by Dr. Lynn, who billed it as "Another Man Cut Up Tonight." The illusion took place in a large curtained cabinet, with the assistant strapped against a board. His leg, arm, and head were supposedly sliced away and then restored. This imaginative wood-block stock poster ignores the trick cabinet and concentrates on the pieces of the assistant.





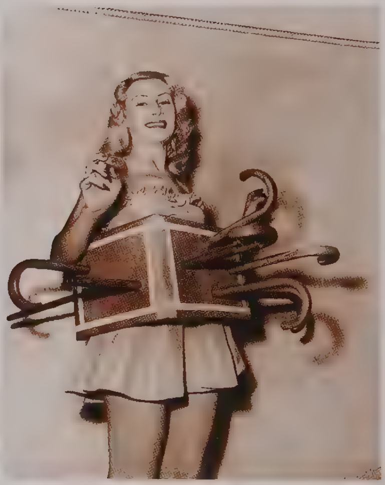
OPPOSITE: **ca. 1931** Dr. Marbrus was a French illusionist who worked through the 1920s and '30s. His stylish poster features his assistant Jenny Brown. Like many other assistants, she endured the Sword Box illusion, but the poster suggests that her invulnerability endowed her with ghostlike qualities.

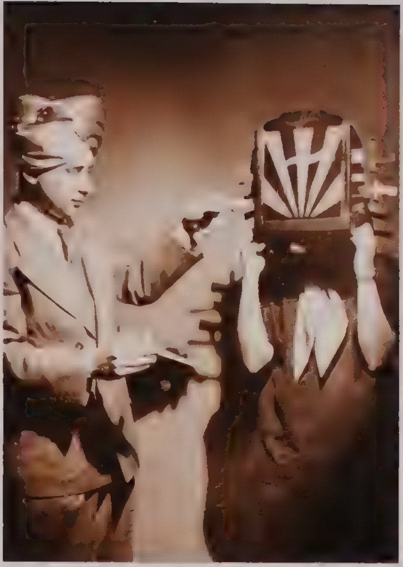
CENTER AND RIGHT: **ca. 1925** An anonymous magician demonstrates the Sword Box. A woman tucks herself inside the box. It is then closed and pierced by dozens of swords. Then the box is opened and the woman has disappeared. The swords are withdrawn and she reappears, completely unharmed. Notice the elaborate sword rack to display the many weapons used.



LEFT: **ca. 1935** The French magician Carrère performed P. T. Selbit's Stick Rack illusion. A woman entered an upright cabinet, and dozens of wooden canes were pushed through it. When a trapeze was lowered into the cabinet and then raised again, the woman was pulled up, apparently passing through the solid canes.

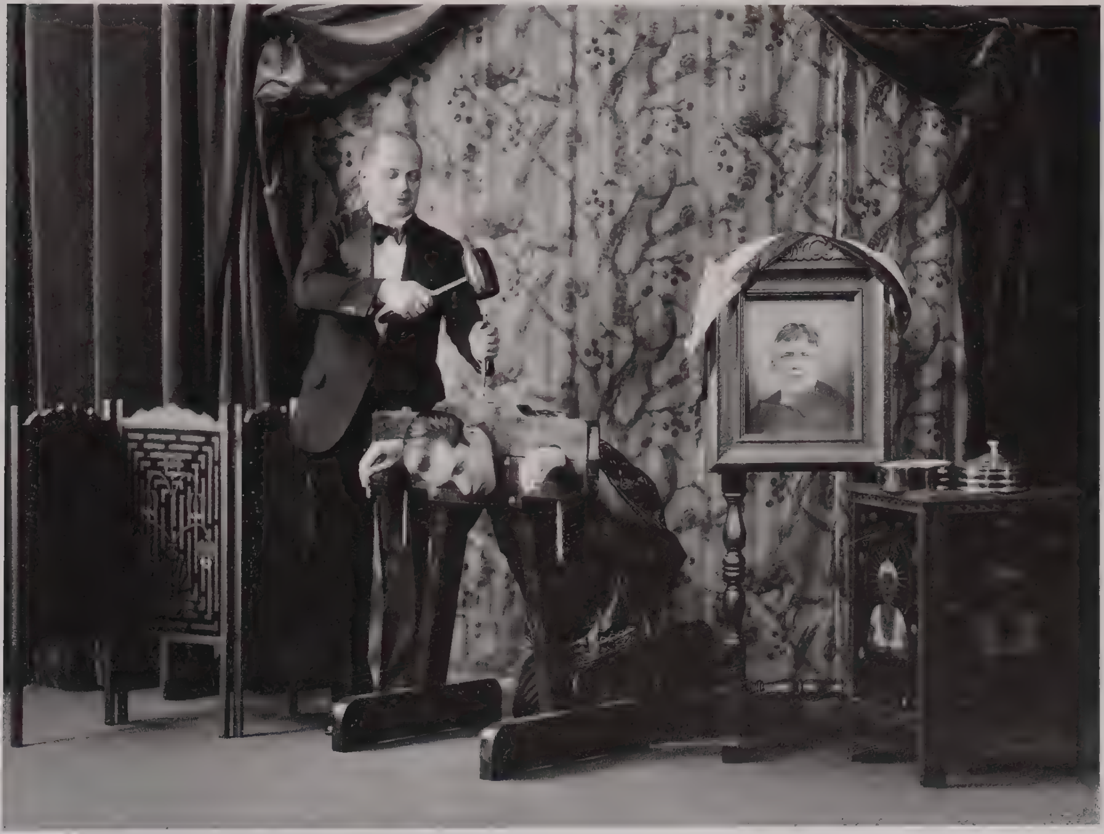
BELOW: **ca. 1940** An unknown assistant grins during her performance, demonstrating that she's unharmed by the ordeal. Although these tiny tortures might seem silly or clichéd, magicians attempted to reduce the size of these props, making them practical for small shows, private parties, and nightclubs.

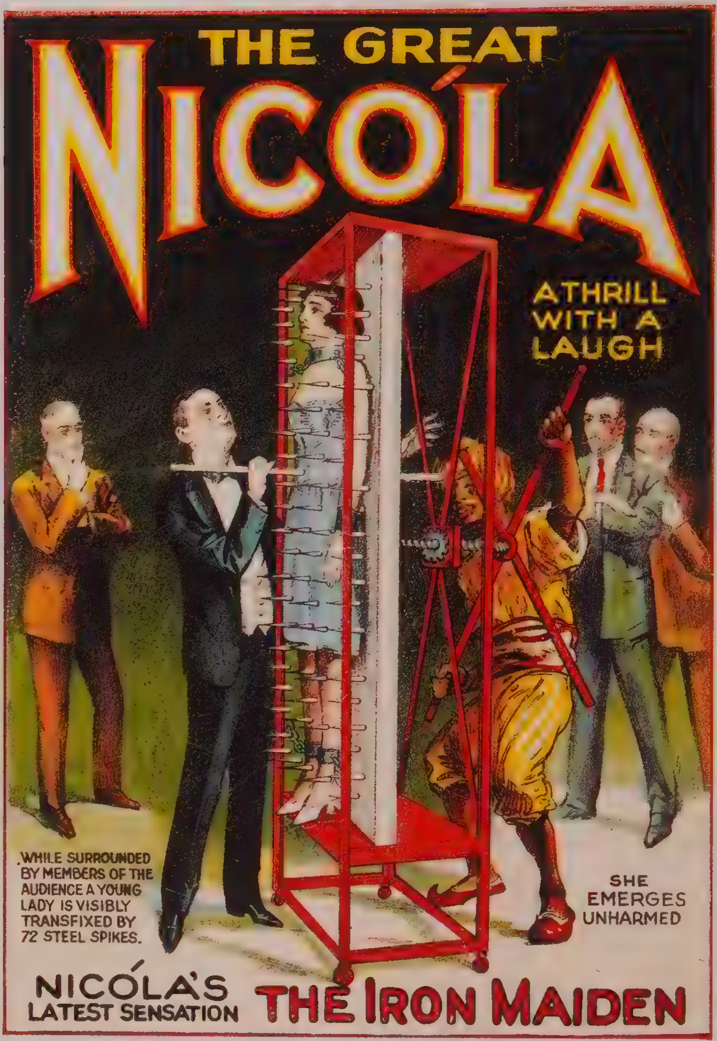




ABOVE: **ca. 1945** Harry Albacker, a Pennsylvania magician, performed with a portable torture device called the Dagger Chest, which was sold by Abbott's Magic, a magicians' supply company in Colon, Michigan. A woman's head was supposedly pierced by daggers, and then seemed to disappear. The special box for the trick could be purchased for $42.

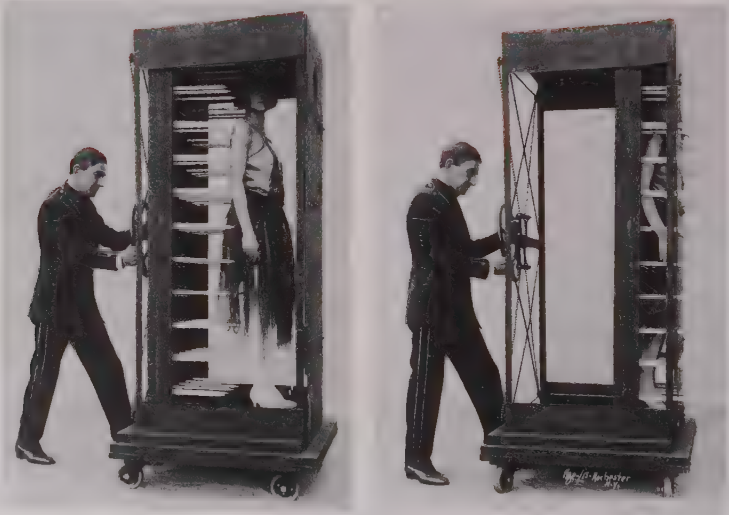
BELOW: **1929** Dr. Rosetti was the stage name of a Chicago-based, German-speaking magician named Fred Roebling. His show consisted of apparatus purchased from Thayer Magic Manufacturing Company, a Los Angeles manufacturer of wood props for magicians. Thayer's Demon of Doom was a set of stocks used to apparently drive spikes through an assistant's wrists and neck.



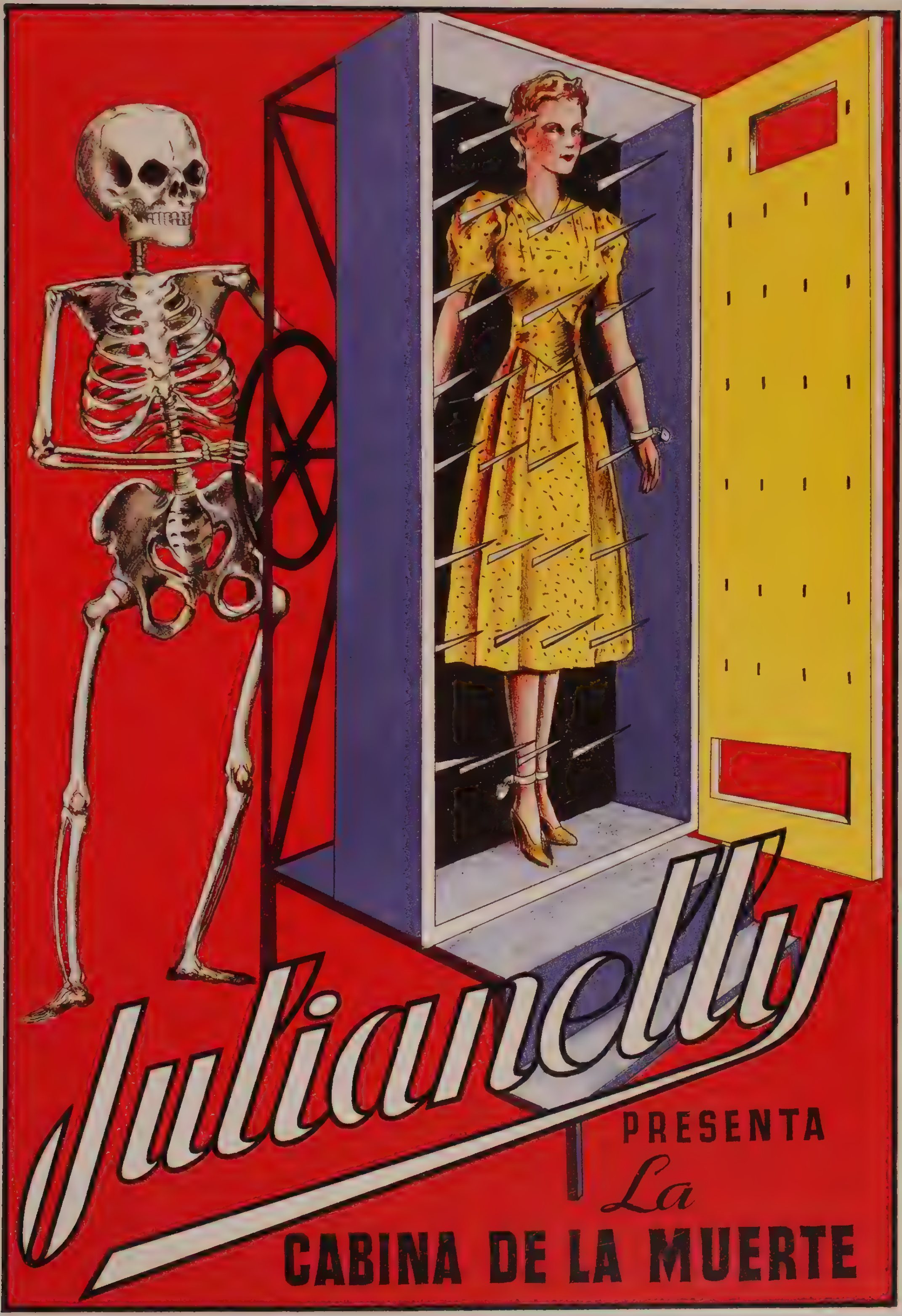

THE GREAT
NICÓLA
A THRILL WITH A LAUGH
WHILE SURROUNDED BY MEMBERS OF THE AUDIENCE A YOUNG LADY IS VISIBLY TRANSFIXED BY 72 STEEL SPIKES.
SHE EMERGES UNHARMED
NICÓLA'S LATEST SENSATION
THE IRON MAIDEN

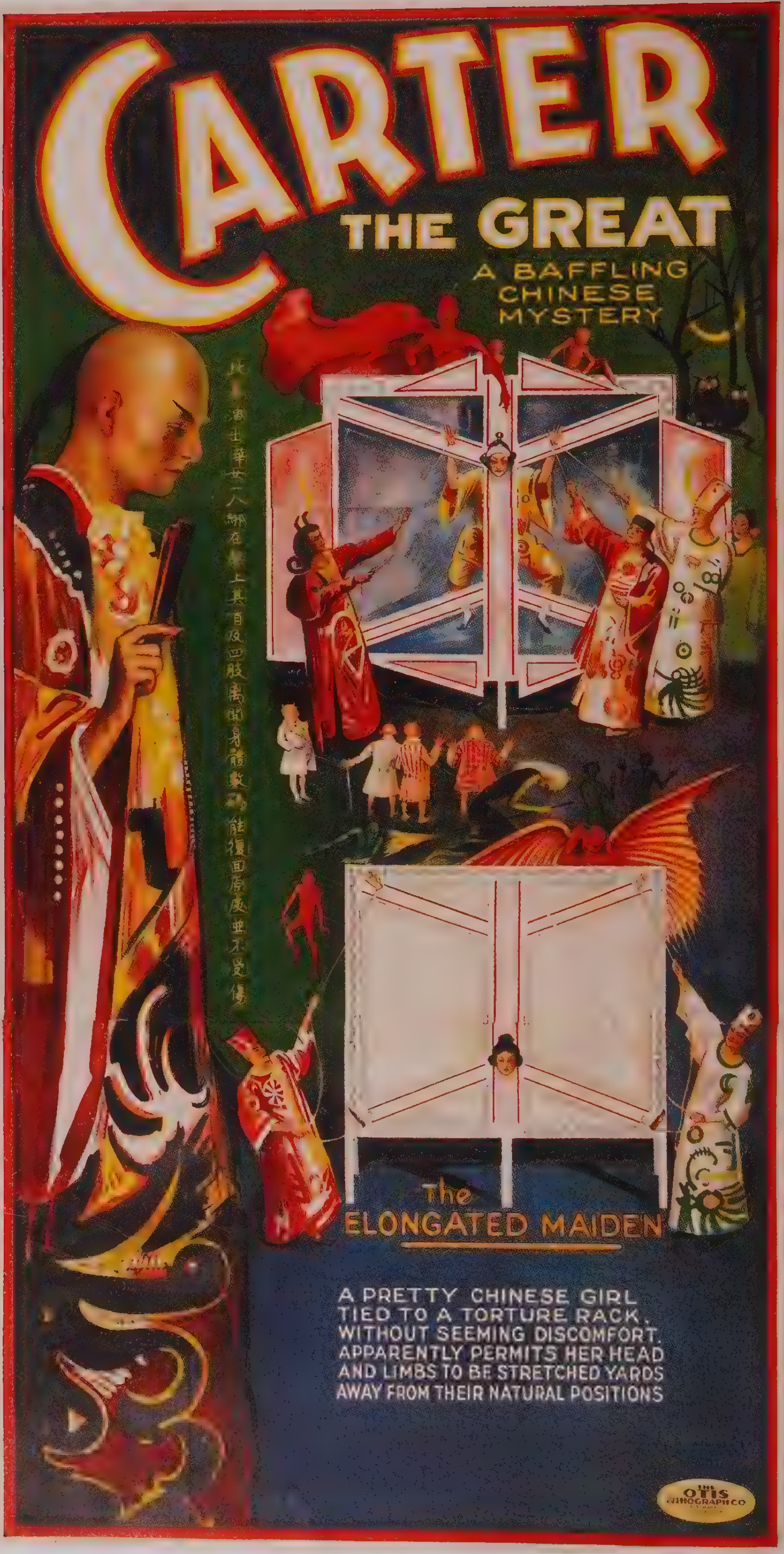
LEFT: **ca. 1925** William Nicol, or the Great Nicola, featured Selbit's illusion in his show. Nicola was a tenacious performer with artistically designed posters, but his fellow magicians considered him famously inadequate. The magician Percy Abbott described the animated conversation after a Nicola performance: "He was good, but he didn't fool me!"

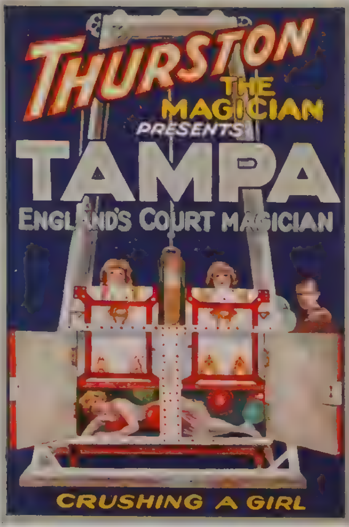
OPPOSITE: **ca. 1950** Julianelly was a Spanish magician who performed an elaborate illusion show. One of his illusions was Selbit's Human Pincushion, a modern version of the medieval iron maiden torture. In this illustration of the "Cabina de la Muerte" (Cabinet of Death), the artist included a skeleton turning the crank and piercing the woman.



RIGHT: **ca. 1927** Selbit's Human Pincushion was presented in Howard Thurston's show. The complicated mechanical device was expensive and elaborate, with chains, gears, and polished steel spikes. Although audiences found it slow, there's no question that it was an ingenious invention.


Julianelly
PRESENTA
La
CABINA DE LA MUERTE


CARTER
THE GREAT
A BAFFLING CHINESE MYSTERY
The ELONGATED MAIDEN
A PRETTY CHINESE GIRL TIED TO A TORTURE RACK, WITHOUT SEEMING DISCOMFORT, APPARENTLY PERMITS HER HEAD AND LIMBS TO BE STRETCHED YARDS AWAY FROM THEIR NATURAL POSITIONS
THE OTIS LITHOGRAPH CO

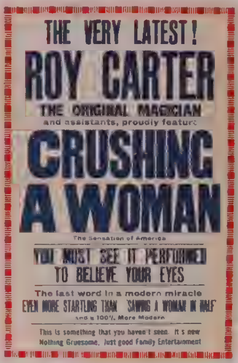


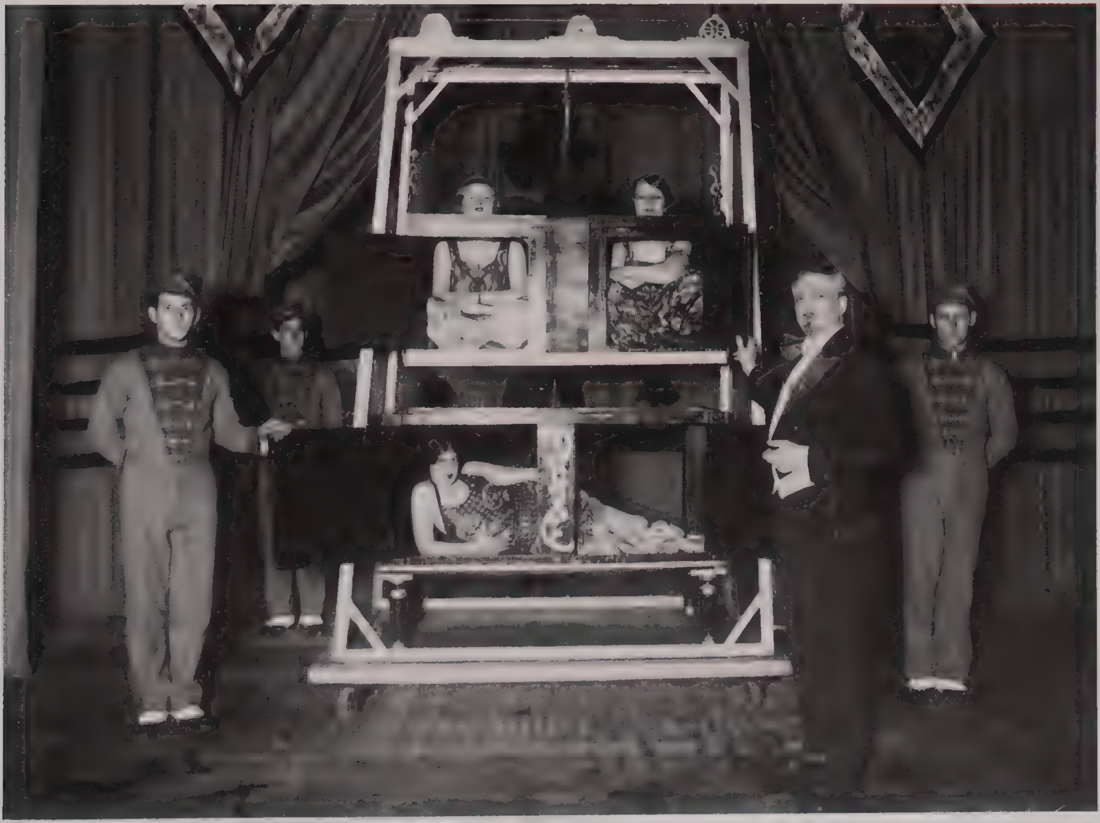
LEFT: **ca. 1927** Tampa's act was produced by Howard Thurston to fill engagements that Thurston could not accommodate. Selbit's crushing illusion was one of Tampa's specialties. The poster shows a woman about to be crushed beneath heavy metal boxes.

OPPOSITE: **ca. 1926** Charles Carter was proud to present the latest illusions in his elaborate show. Here is his version of Selbit's Stretching a Lady, the successor to Selbit's famous sawing-in-half illusion. A woman was locked into elaborate stocks and seemingly stretched in every direction. In this image, Carter, dressed as an Oriental wizard, watches over the action. The stretching illusion was an instant hit with audiences.

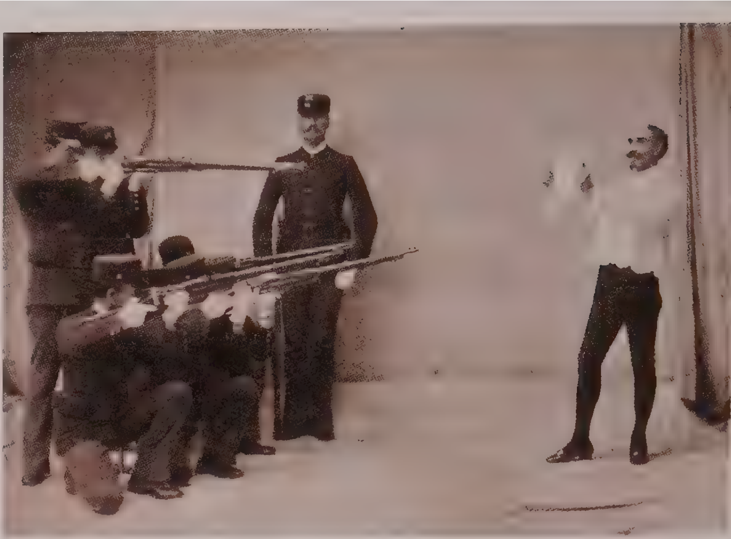
BELOW: **ca. 1927** The crushing illusion was also performed by Dante. A raised box contained two assistants. A box beneath them contained the victim, surrounded by balloons. When the inner box was lowered, the balloons popped, and the woman seemed to have been crushed flat.

BELOW: **ca. 1942** Crushing a Woman was another invention of England's P. T. Selbit. This puzzling illusion had so much success in America in the 1920s that British illusionist Roy Carter later advertised it as "The Sensation of America."


THE VERY LATEST!
ROY CARTER
THE ORIGINAL MAGICIAN
and assistants, proudly feature
CRUSHING
A WOMAN
The Sensation of America
YOU MUST SEE IT PERFORMED
TO BELIEVE YOUR EYES
The last word in a modern miracle
EVEN MORE STARTLING THAN "SAWING A WOMAN IN HALF"
and is 100% More Modern
This is something that you haven't seen. It's new
Nothing Gruesome. Just good Family Entertainment

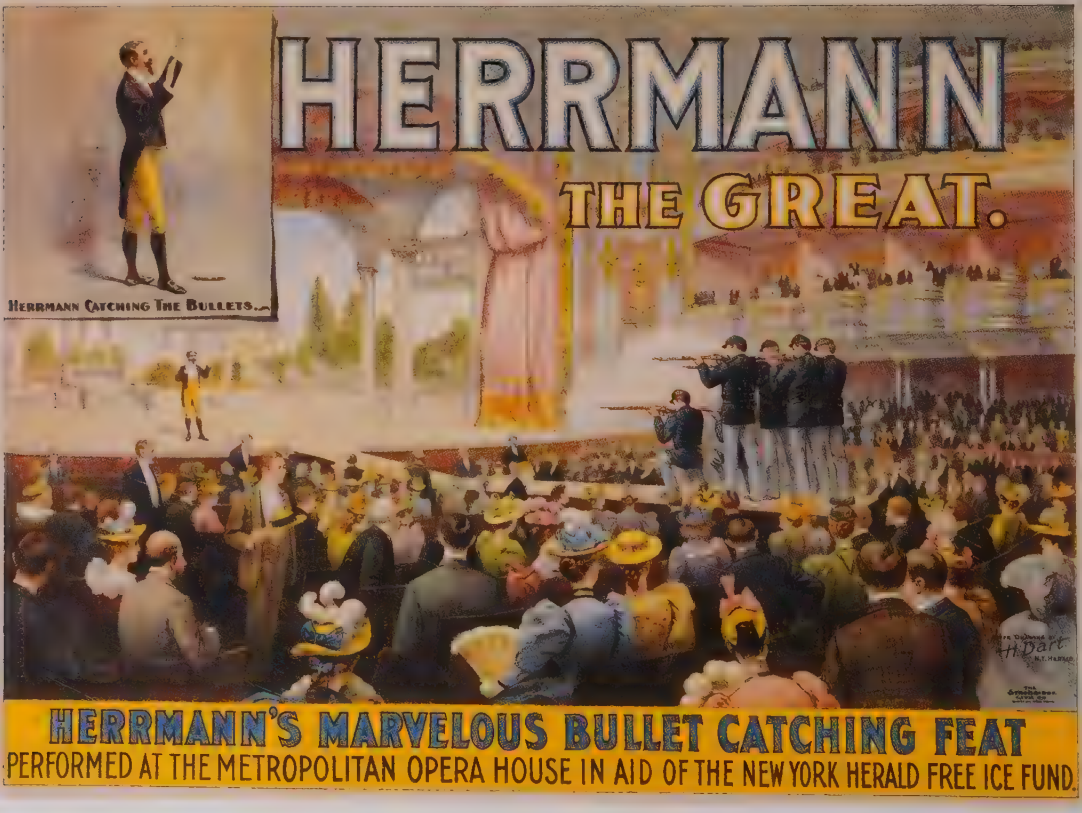


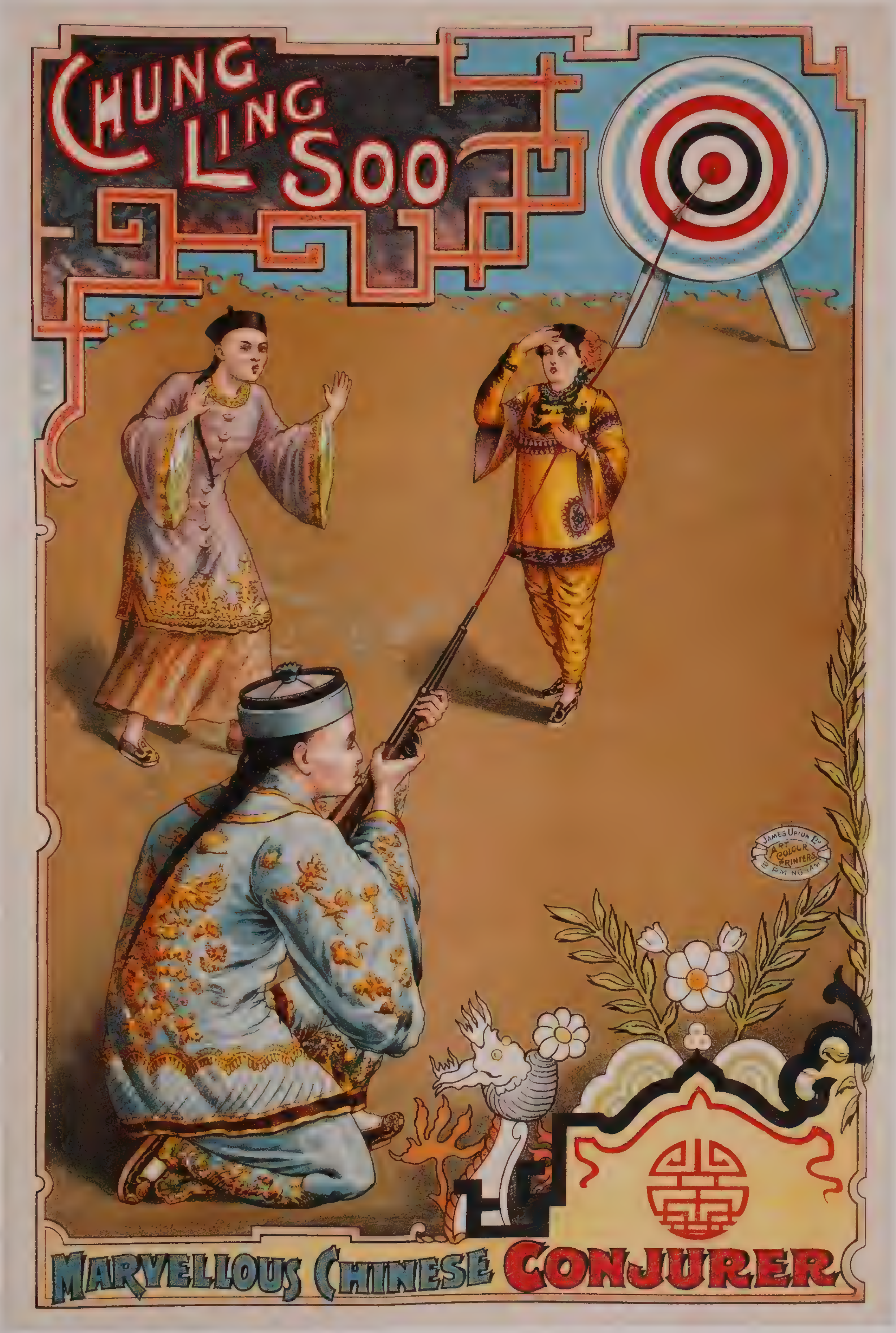
RIGHT: **1896** Alexander Herrmann's last performance of the "Celebrated Shooting Sensation" (as newspapers billed the trick) was in San Francisco. This time he caught the bullets on a porcelain plate that he held like a target. His wife, Adelaide, was always unnerved by the trick, and after this 1896 show, he promised he would never perform it again.

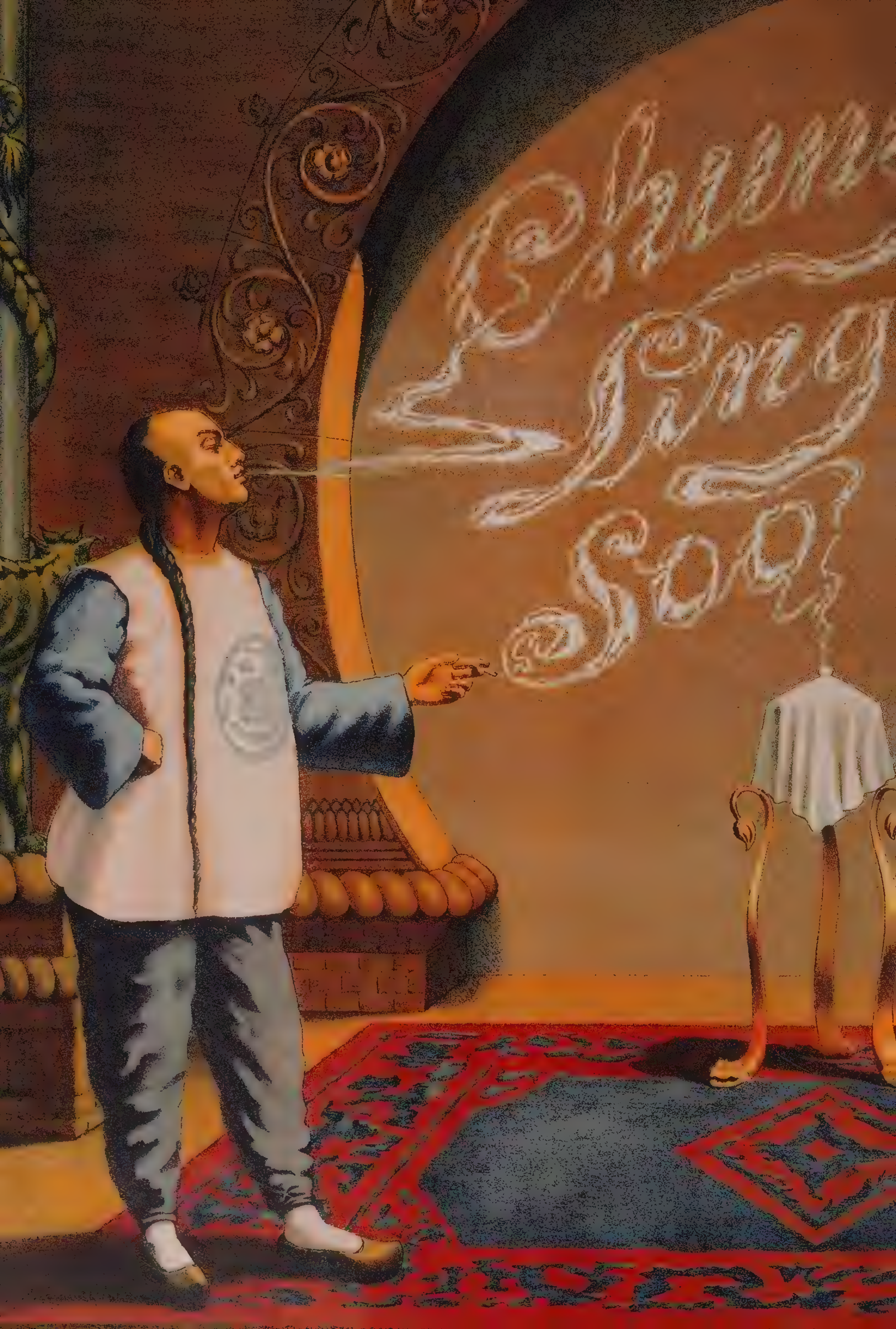


BELOW: **1894** Herrmann the Great performed the dangerous Bullet Catching Trick only seven times in his career, saving it for special occasions. In the summer of 1894, it was the feature of a charity show at New York's Metropolitan Opera House. Herrmann appeared to catch the marked bullets in his clenched fists, and then dropped them onto a plate for identification.

OPPOSITE: **ca. 1908** Chung Ling Soo invented the spectacular Living Target, in which he fired an arrow and rope through his assistant. His poster for the mystery captures the dramatic situation and surrounds it with delicate Chinese motifs, suggesting the Oriental artistry of his performance.

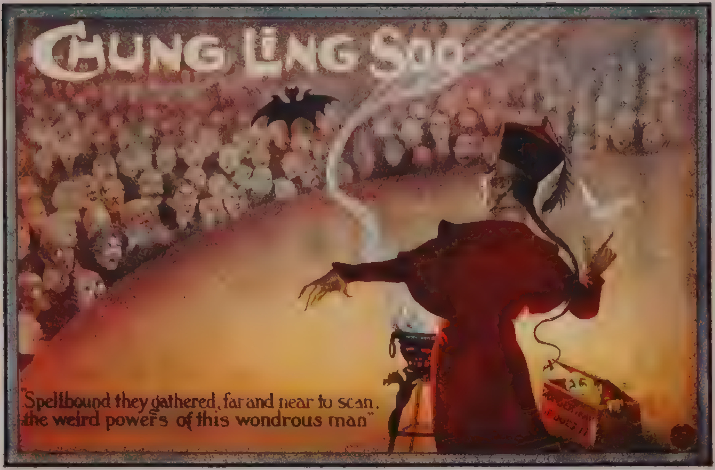

HERRMANN
THE GREAT.
HERRMANN CATCHING THE BULLETS.
H. Dart
N.Y. Herald
HERRMANN'S MARVELOUS BULLET CATCHING FEAT
PERFORMED AT THE METROPOLITAN OPERA HOUSE IN AID OF THE NEW YORK HERALD FREE ICE FUND.


CHUNG LING SOO
JAMES UPTON LTD ART COLOUR PRINTERS BIRMINGHAM
MARVELLOUS CHINESE CONJURER


Chun
Ling
Soo

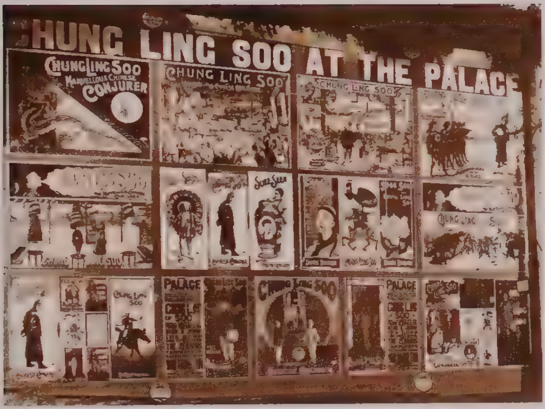
RIGHT: **ca. 1908** Onstage, Chung Ling Soo's personality suggested a beguiling and exotic grandeur. This poster focuses on the audience instead of the magician. An auditorium of wide eyes cleverly tells the story and promises the most important element of a magic show: you will be amazed!

OPPOSITE: **ca. 1908** In the Demon Smoke, Chung Ling Soo covered an empty glass vase and then puffed on a cigarette, blowing smoke. When the vase was uncovered, it was filled with smoke. The artist embellished this simple trick, creating a captivating image.

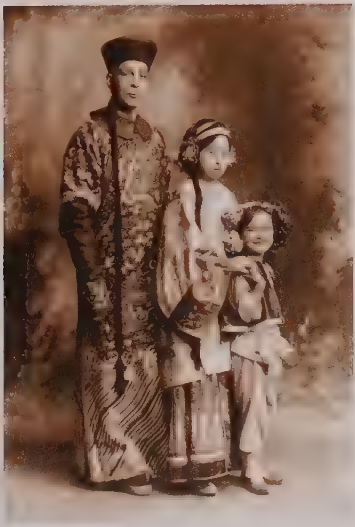

CHUNG LING SOO
"Spellbound they gathered, far and near to scan.
the weird powers of this wondrous man"

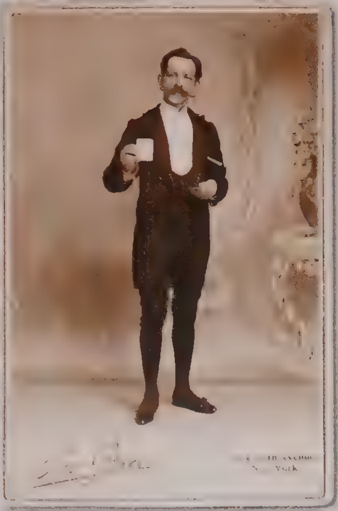
LEFT: **ca. 1910** A fence in Bristol, England, is covered with Chung Ling Soo posters, advertising his appearance at a local music hall. This photo shows 31 different posters for the magician. It's believed that, over the course of his career, he used as many as 100 different poster images to attract audiences.

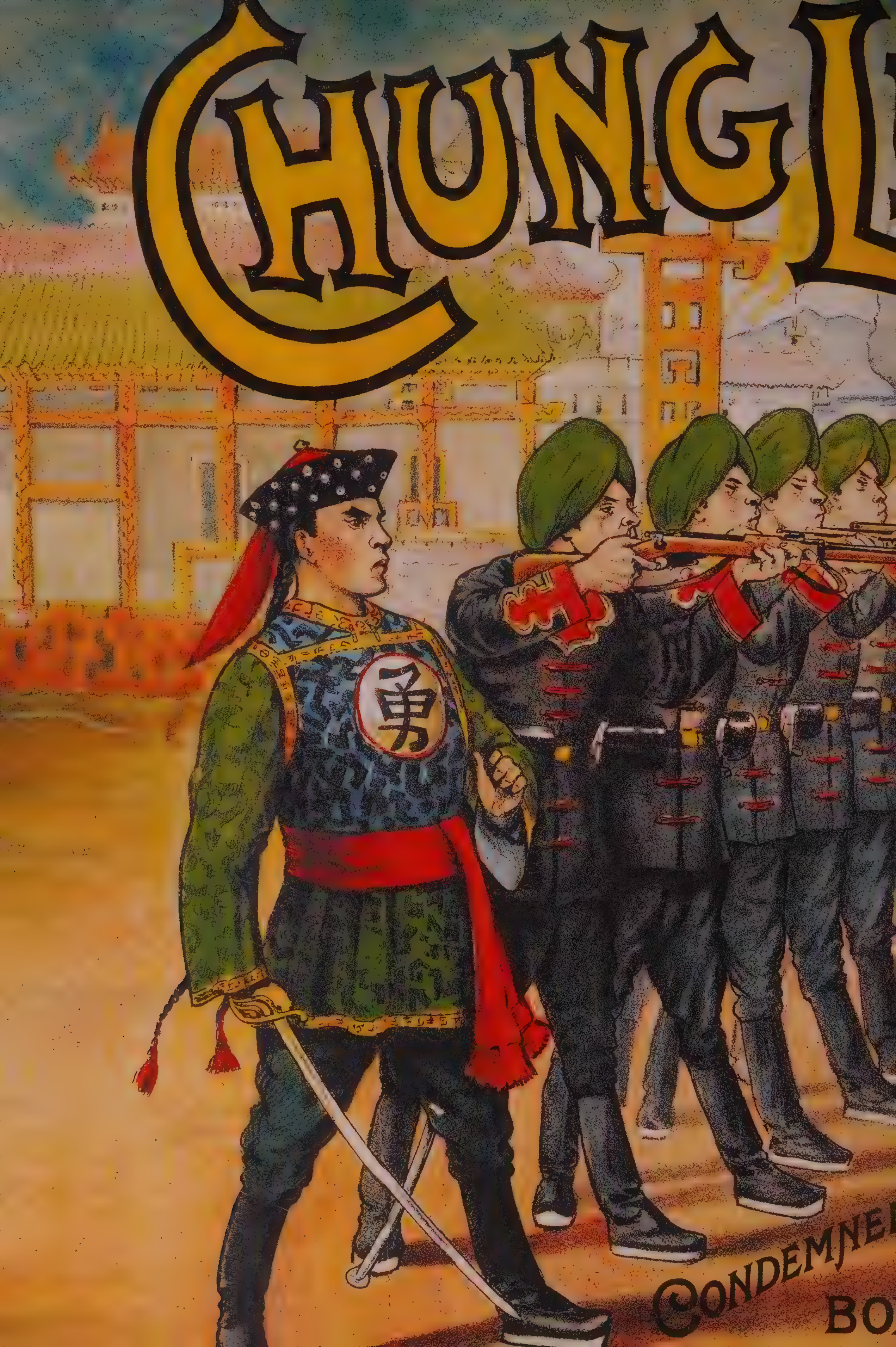
PAGES 478–479: **1907** Chung Ling Soo's dramatic Bullet Catching Trick led to his tragic death. Like Herrmann the Great, Soo rarely performed the illusion. This poster captures the dramatic scene in which he survived a firing squad of Chinese Boxers. On March 23, 1918, the trick rifle misfired, killing this popular magician.


CHUNG LING SOO AT THE PALACE
CHUNG LING SOO
MARVELLOUS CHINESE CONJURER
CHUNG LING SOO
CHUNG LING SOO
SUEE SEEN
PALACE
CHUNG LING SOO
PALACE

RIGHT: **ca. 1907 and 1895** Onstage, the Soo "family" consisted of Chung Ling Soo; his wife, Suee Seen; and their "daughter," Bamboo Flower. In fact, Soo and his wife were Americans. He was born William Ellsworth Robinson, and had a successful career as a New York magician, pictured at far right, before he adopted a Chinese guise. His wife, Olive Path, was an Ohio showgirl. Little Bamboo Flower was actually half Japanese and half English; she was the daughter of Soo's assistant, Frank Kametaro.






CHUNG L
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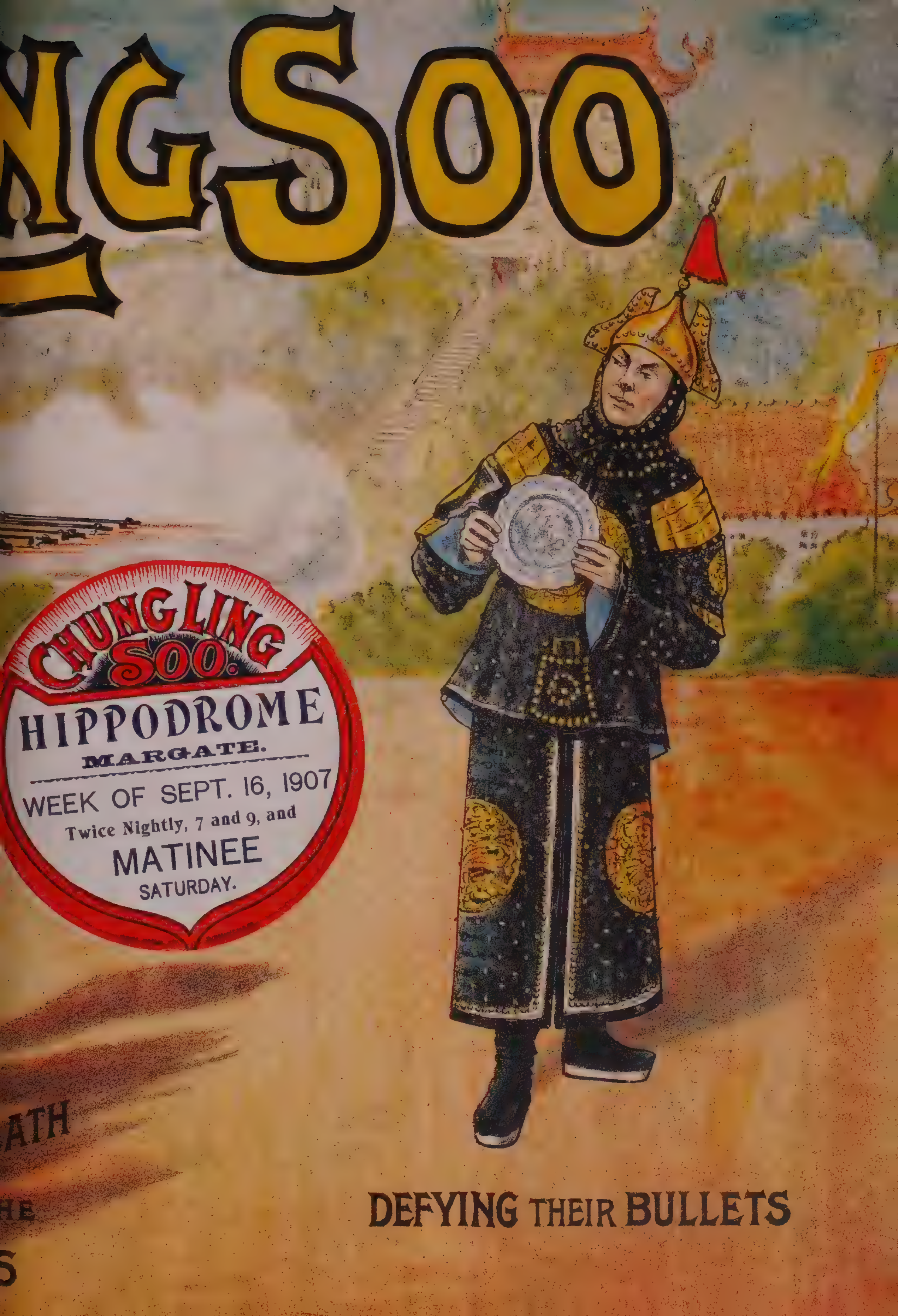
NG SOO
ATH
HE
S
DEFYING THEIR BULLETS

CHUNG LING SOO.
HIPPODROME
MARGATE.
WEEK OF SEPT. 16, 1907
Twice Nightly, 7 and 9, and
MATINEE
SATURDAY.

8

8

MAGIC IN VAUDEVILLE AND NIGHTCLUBS

Mike Caveney

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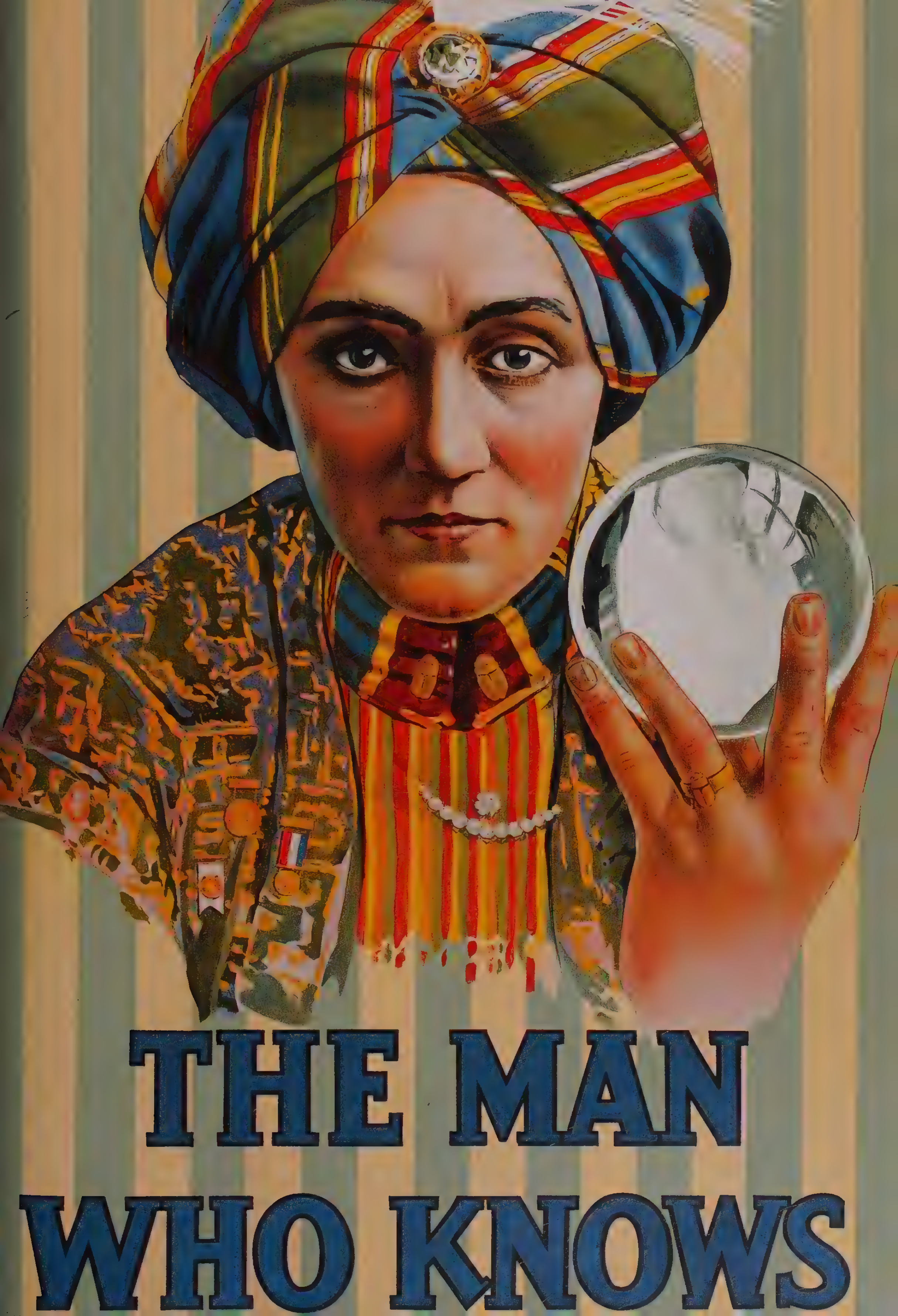

THE MAN
WHO KNOWS

8

Mike Caveney

MAGIC IN VAUDEVILLE AND NIGHTCLUBS

During the 1870s, a confluence of conditions produced a climate that all but demanded the emergence of a brand new kind of amusement for the common man. In North America and Australia it was called *vaudeville*, in Britain it was *music hall*, and on the European continent it was known as *variety*. But whatever the name, the presentation was the same: a smorgasbord of talent combined into a single show that was as unsophisticated as it was amusing. Vaudeville shows were the kind of entertainment that a working man could attend with his wife and children, knowing that the bill of fare would be wholesome and suitable for all ages. Some might prefer the singers, dancers, and acrobats, while others enjoyed the jugglers, animal acts, comedians, and magicians. But by evening's end, all would agree that they had been royally entertained.

PAGE 481: **1915** In the 1870s, a New York singer named Tony Pastor recognized that the burgeoning middle class was ready for a new form of live entertainment—namely vaudeville. His alcohol- and profanity-free place of amusement was equal parts medicine show, dime museum, minstrel show, circus, and sideshow. This poster shows Alexander (Claude Conlin) in his mind-reading attire.

OPPOSITE: **ca. 1890** The vaudeville theaters and music halls of the world promised their patrons unique performances that existed nowhere else. Magicians provided a few minutes of wonder, for example Marion Purdue the Mysterious Venus's gravity-defying stroll across the stage in midair.

LEFT: **1939** Vaudeville theater chains sprang up in all parts of the world. Today, vaudeville is a distant memory, but many of its palaces of varieties were transformed into movie houses. Here magician Will Rock appears at the Los Angeles Orpheum, which still exists today, during the waning days of vaudeville.

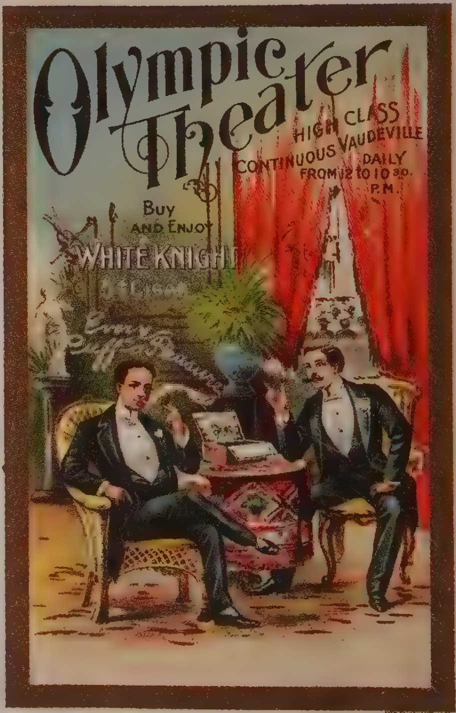
BELOW: **1901** This program cover from Chicago's Olympic Theater depicts formally dressed men enjoying fine cigars in a high-class setting. But the success of vaudeville was dependent upon its appeal to all people, regardless of their age, gender, or class.

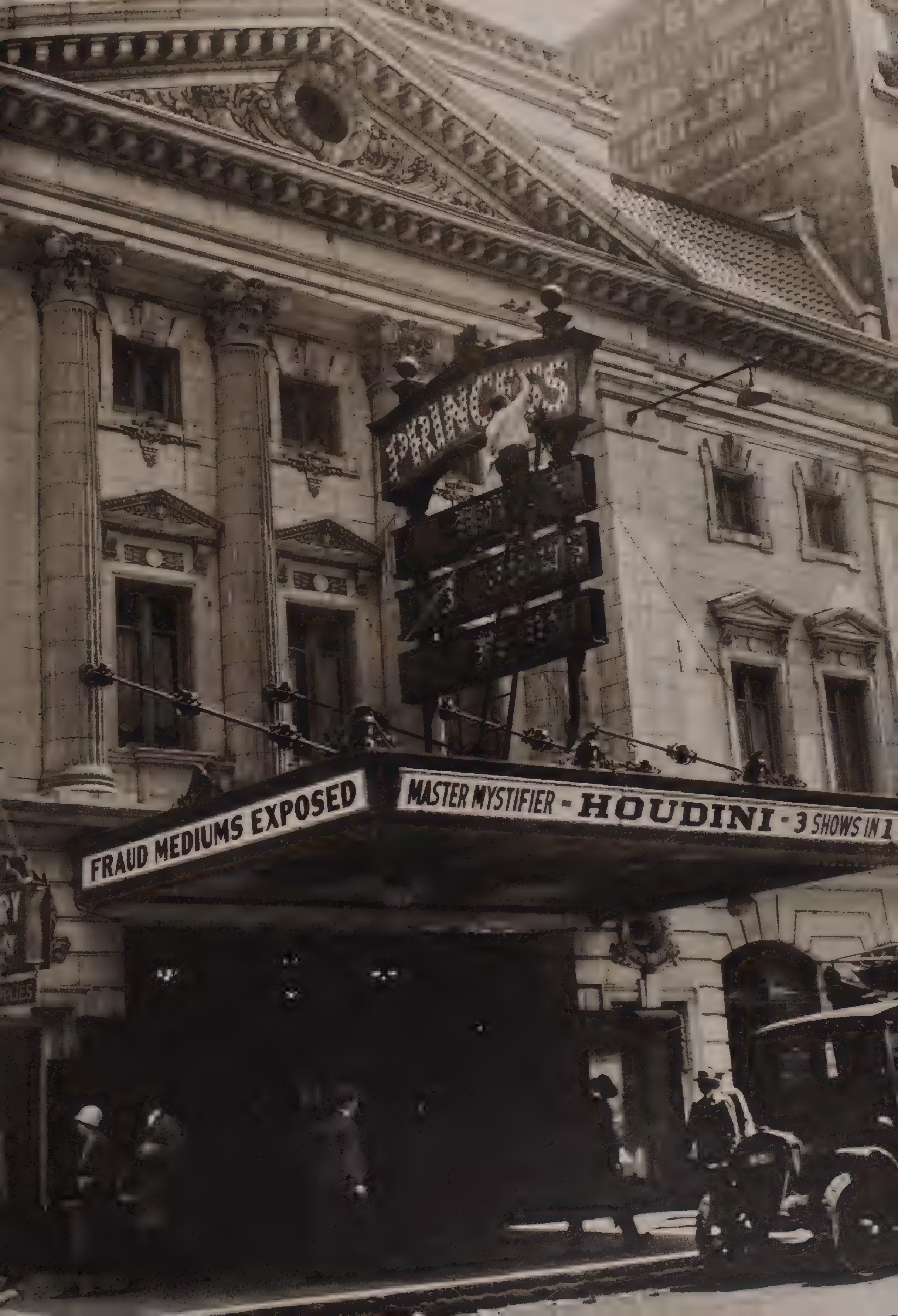
OPPOSITE: **ca. 1925** The theaters that were constructed by the largest vaudeville chains were magnificently designed and elaborately decorated, both inside and out. The biggest names in show business during the first quarter of the 20th century were vaudevillians such as Harry Houdini, who spent nearly his entire career as a headliner. He is advertised here presenting a full-evening show consisting of magic, escapes, and an exposé of spirit mediums.

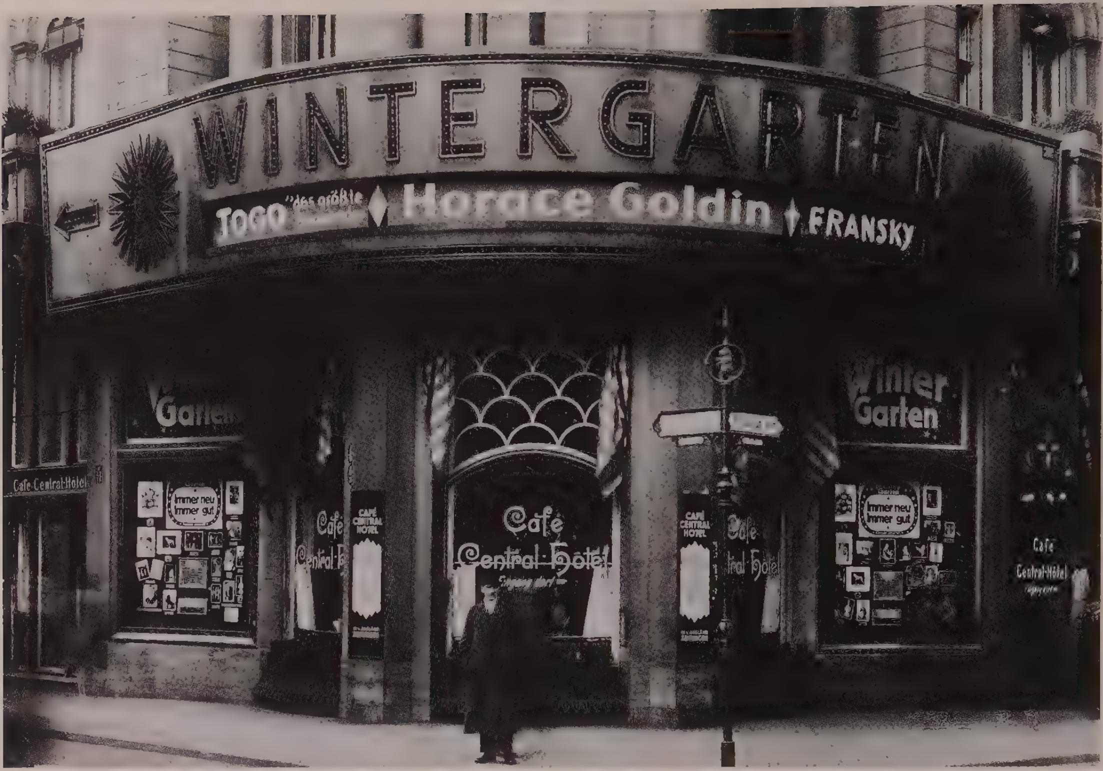
Born of Beer Halls and Concert Saloons

Vaudeville didn't just spring from the earth one day, fully formed, just as it didn't die on a specific day, decades later. Its roots can be traced to the early 1800s, when beer halls and concert saloons began offering live entertainment. These establishments were nothing more than taverns with platforms at one end. Their primary goal was to sell as much alcohol as possible, and the job of the performers was simply to prolong the patrons' visits. And it wasn't that ladies weren't allowed in concert saloons; it was that a real lady wouldn't have been caught dead in one. A story that appears in Douglas Gilbert's *American Vaudeville: Its Life and Times* (1940) captures the raucous atmosphere of a typical 19th-century beer hall: A manager steps onto the platform and announces, "Now, gentlemen, Miss Lillian Dinkins will sing 'Love Among the Roses.'" A drunk in the audience staggers forward and hollers, "She is a whore!" Without missing a beat, the manager continues, "Nevertheless, Miss Dinkins will sing 'Love Among the Roses.'"

An early step in the evolution of vaudeville was the opening of Barnum's American Museum in New York City, in 1841. P. T. Barnum opened the museum—a combination of a sideshow, natural history museum, zoo, and lecture hall—to make money, and he soon realized that ticket sales

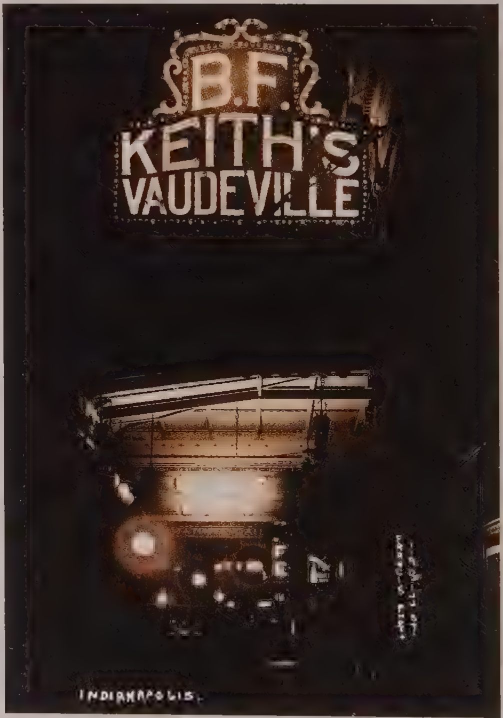



PRINCESS
FRAUD MEDIUMS EXPOSED
MASTER MYSTIFIER - HOUDINI - 3 SHOWS IN 1


WINTERGARTEN
TOGO "des größte
Horace Goldin
FRANSKY
Winter Garten
Immer neu Immer gut
Café Central-Hotel
Cafe Central-Hotel

ABOVE: **ca. 1929** Rather than rely on witty patter to entertain the audience, American-born Horace Goldin's *Whirlwind of Mystery* featured visual magic presented at breakneck speed. By performing his magic with few words, Goldin was able to earn enormous salaries all over the world. One of the most famous variety theaters in Europe was Berlin's Wintergarten.

RIGHT: **1927** By purchasing existing theater chains, Benjamin Franklin Keith built the largest vaudeville circuit in America. The Great Leon has his name up in lights at Keith's Theater in Indianapolis. Typically, this was the view that patrons would enjoy as they strolled down the sidewalk toward the theater.


B.F. KEITH'S VAUDEVILLE
INDIANAPOLIS.

could increase appreciably if he enticed women and children through the doors. He accomplished this by offering wholesome live performances, and these, of course, included magicians. One such act was Signor Antonio Blitz. Born in England, Blitz spent the majority of his career in America. A typical Blitz performance included ventriloquism, plate spinning, magic, and an eye-popping demonstration by his "celebrated learned canary birds." Barnum also exhibited a letter-writing and drawing automaton he had purchased from the famed French magician Jean Eugène Robert-Houdin during a trip to France. The success of these early performances allowed conjurers to stake their claim in what would eventually become vaudeville.

The American Museum was a financial and critical success, but when Barnum's emporium burned for the second time, in 1868, he joined forces with James A. Bailey, and within a few years they'd formed the first circus to travel by rail. While Barnum and his partners were busy making the circus respectable (and profitable), the task of transforming variety entertainment into a respectable (and profitable) enterprise fell on the shoulders of a rotund singer and entrepreneur named Tony Pastor. Indeed, Pastor had learned from the very best, having appeared as a child-prodigy singer onstage at Barnum's museum.

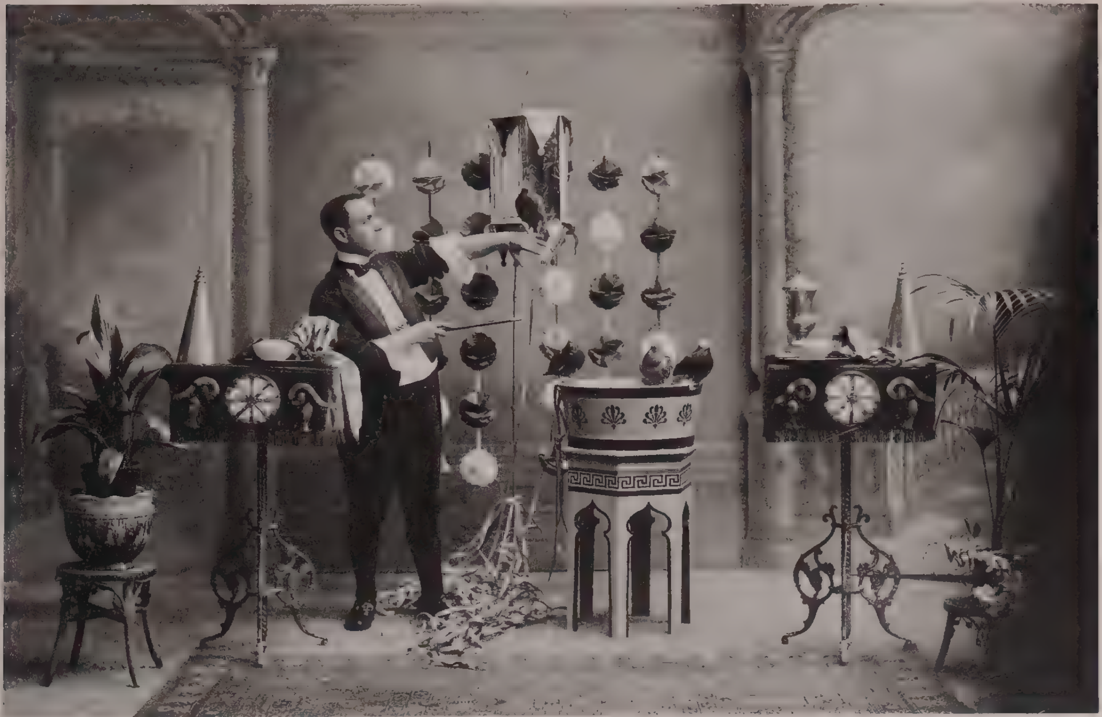
ABOVE LEFT: **ca. 1905** Swedish-born Nate Leipzig became an unlikely vaudeville star by presenting intimate tricks with cards and thimbles for a small group of audience members invited onto the stage. The spectators' expressions of disbelief, combined with Leipzig's winning personality, made him a popular act on both sides of the Atlantic.

ABOVE RIGHT: **1901** As soon as English-born Percy Thomas Tibbles stepped onto the stage, he became P. T. Selbit, "the Card and Coin Demon." His career as a stage manipulator was short-lived, as he became a successful illusionist, inventing, among many other mysteries, the 20th-century classic Sawing Through a Woman (see page 400).

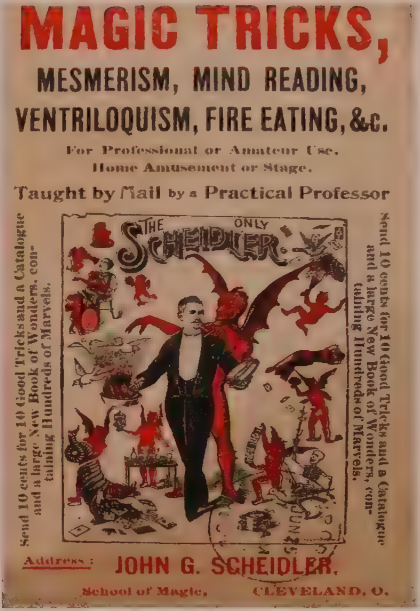
OPPOSITE: **ca. 1915** The vaudeville stage provided a perfect environment for the presentation of magic. Hidden areas above and below the stage and in each wing were used to hide machinery that was capable of producing illusionary effects. Here, a completely forgotten performer, Art Mozier, performs one of magic's classic illusions.

ABOVE: **ca. 1915** Husbands and wives, brothers and sisters, parents and children—all teamed up to form an endless variety of magic acts. Exotic makeup, costumes, and stage names helped create an air of mysticism that they hoped would set their acts apart from all the rest.

BELOW: **ca. 1900** With quality magical apparatus like the type shown here being produced throughout the world, hundreds of magicians put together magic acts and entered vaudeville. A few became famous and wealthy; most (like this performer, F. Trefilo) spent their careers working the small-time circuits.



Scheidler
Scheidler
Scheidler
Swords Bro's, Professional Photographers, York, Pa.



MAGIC TRICKS,
MESMERISM, MIND READING,
VENTRILOQUISM, FIRE EATING, &c.
For Professional or Amateur Use,
Home Amusement or Stage.
Taught by Mail by a Practical Professor

Send 10 cents for 10 Good Tricks and a Catalogue and a large New Book of Wonders, containing Hundreds of Marvels.

Send 10 cents for 10 Good Tricks and a Catalogue and a large New Book of Wonders, containing Hundreds of Marvels.

THE ONLY SCHEIDLER

Address: JOHN G. SCHEIDLER.
School of Magic, CLEVELAND, O.

OPPOSITE: **ca. 1900** An important element in many vaudeville magic acts was sex appeal. Thousands of spouses of mainly male magic entertainers appeared as assistants, in part for their beauty and charm, and partly because they didn't require a paycheck.

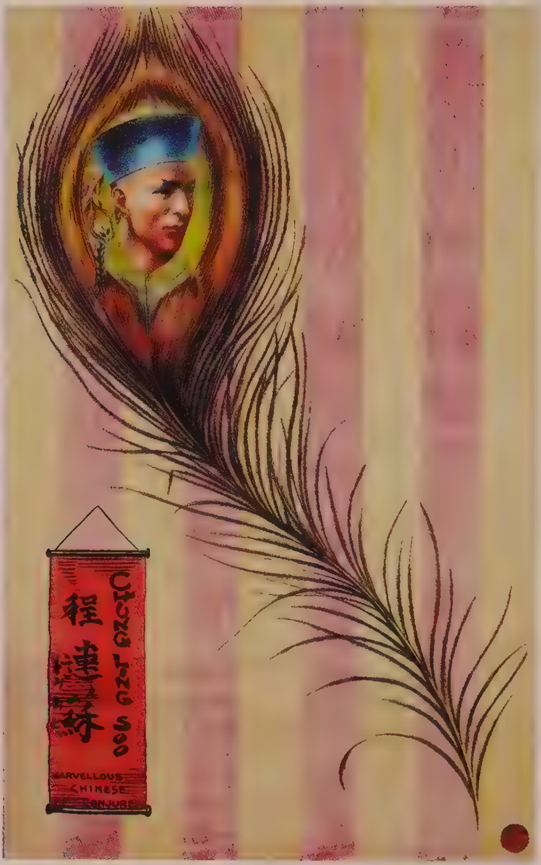
ABOVE: **ca. 1900** To widen his appeal, John Scheidler offered magic, ventriloquism, fire-eating, hypnotism, Punch and Judy puppets, sword-swallowing, and mind reading. As a sideline, he sold instructions, above right, to most of these skills to interested parties through the mail.

BELOW: **ca. 1910** Sometimes women stepped into the spotlight and became magicians. Such was the case for Mademoiselle Sousa, who not only performed tricks made famous by Harry Kellar, Alexander Herrmann, and Buatier de Kolta, but also carried her own tiger- and leopard-skin rugs with which to decorate the stage.

Vaudeville Gets Classy & Goes Global

Beginning in 1875, Pastor refined the new style of variety entertainment by featuring an alcohol- and profanity-free environment. He was, by all accounts, "the father of vaudeville." According to his biographer, Parker Zellers, Pastor was "an astute showman and a pugnacious reformer. He sought and won first class patronage for his shows by making them the best and the cleanest in town ... His crusade was to free variety entertainment from the saloon trappings of drink, smoke, and coarseness." By doing away with the bawdy singers and blue comedians, Tony Pastor created a new kind of show business, one that not only captivated America, but provided a home for hundreds of skilled magicians during the next half century.

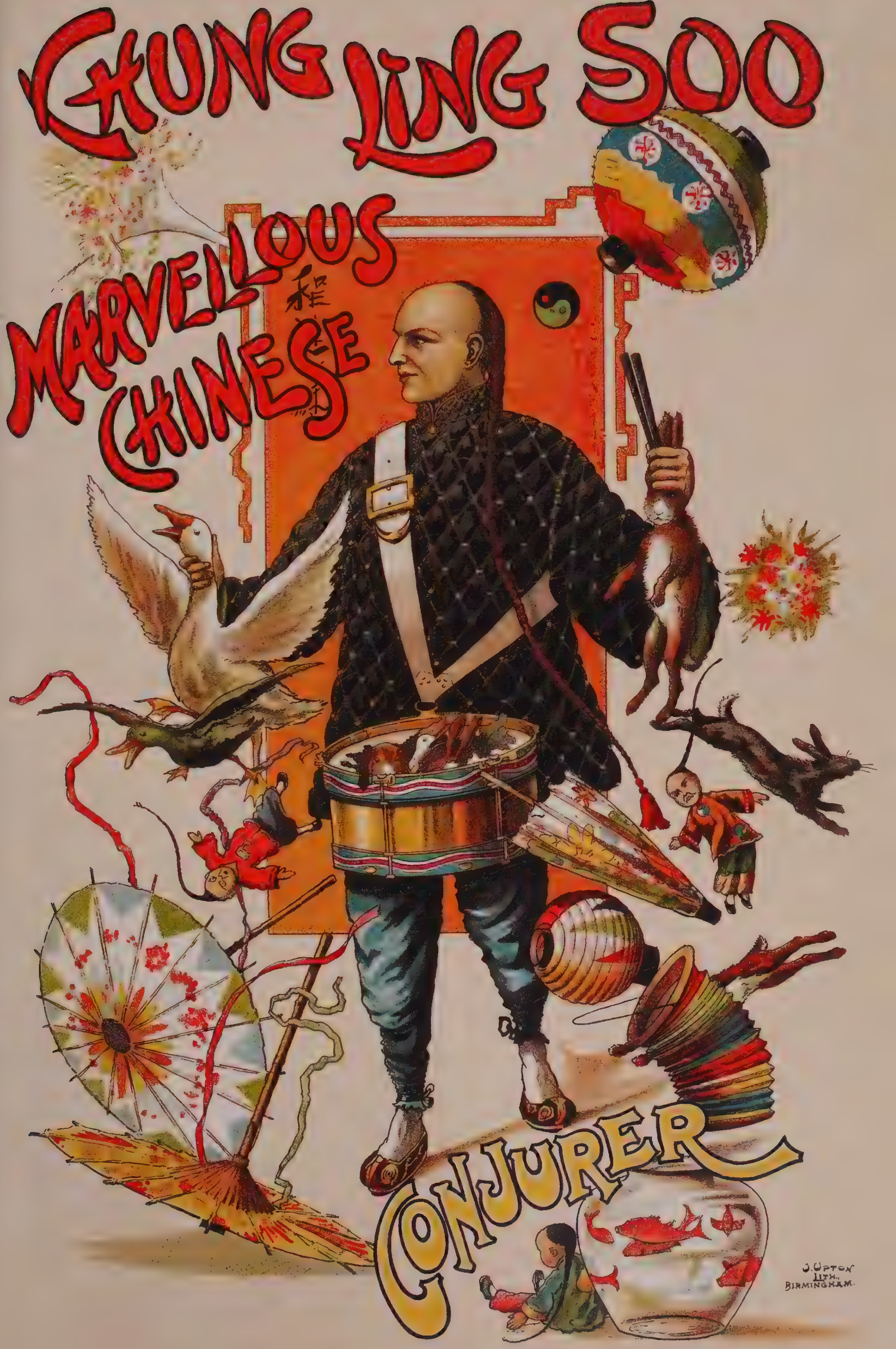
But transforming one successful variety show in New York City into a global industry involving thousands of theaters and tens of thousands of performers required more than the efforts of one man. It would require a perfect storm of technology, and that storm arrived in the form of advanced transportation and communication networks. With the growth of railroads, countries and continents became interconnected. Travel was fast, generally reliable, and affordable. And sprouting up alongside



LEFT: **ca. 1916** When it came to advertising, most magicians preferred exciting images rendered in bright colors. Many of Chung Ling Soo's posters leaned toward subtle graphics done in muted tones that echoed the beauty of the lavish costumes and backdrops used in his show.

RIGHT AND ABOVE RIGHT: **1914 and ca. 1905** Early in Robinson's career as Chung Ling Soo, he duplicated many mysteries of the great Chinese magician Ching Ling Foo, including blowing smoke and showers of sparks from his mouth. Foo's performance at the 1898 Omaha Exposition inspired dozens of new "Chinese" magicians. Right, legend Harry Kellar greets Foo.

OPPOSITE: **ca. 1916** This poster embodies the color and excitement of Soo's drum illusion. His luck ran out in 1918 while performing another of his classics, the Bullet Catching Trick, at London's Wood Green Empire theater. When one of his rifles malfunctioned, Soo was shot dead on stage in front of a horrified audience.


CHUNG LING SOO
MARVELLOUS
CHINESE
程
CONJURER
J. UPTON
LITH.
BIRMINGHAM.

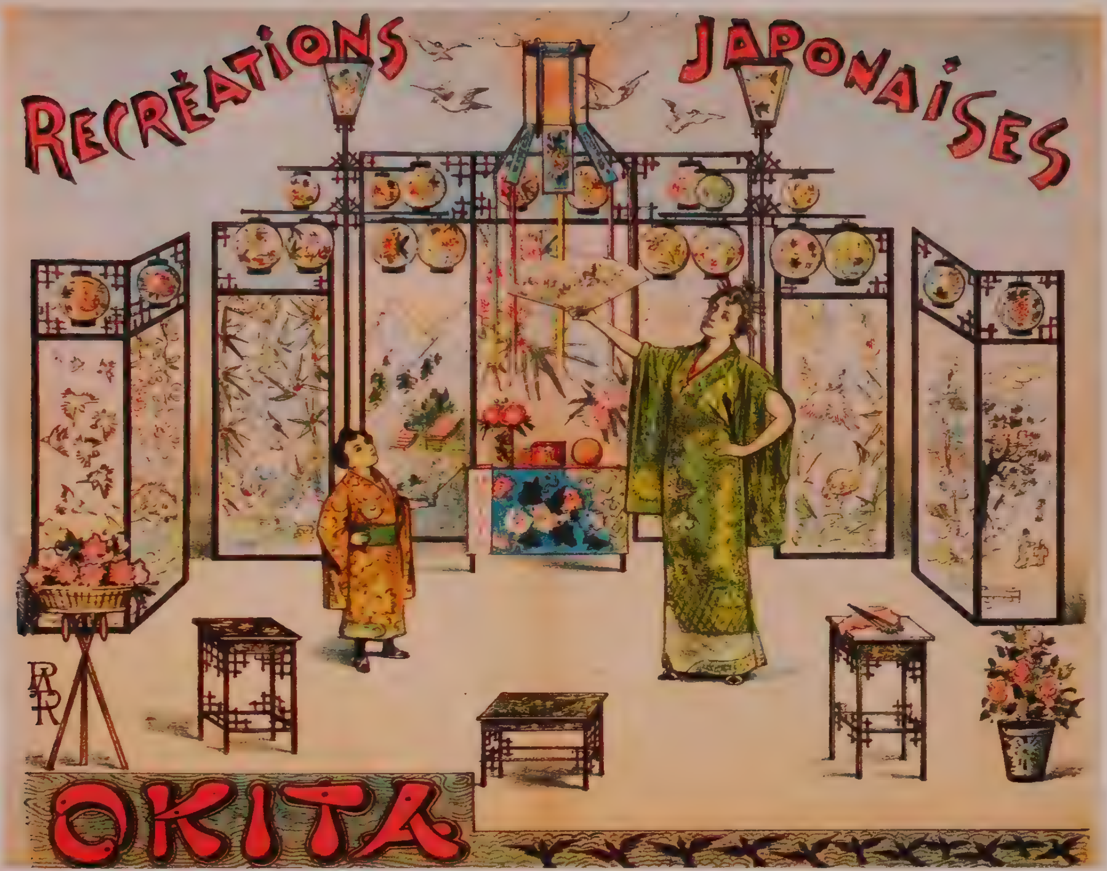
LEFT: **ca. 1938** Another pseudo-Chinese conjurer was Edmund Younger from Newcastle upon Tyne, England, who performed as Li Chung Soo. China, at this time, was a distant land that few Westerners had visited, so the addition of Oriental lanterns and elaborately embroidered robes added an extra layer of mystery.

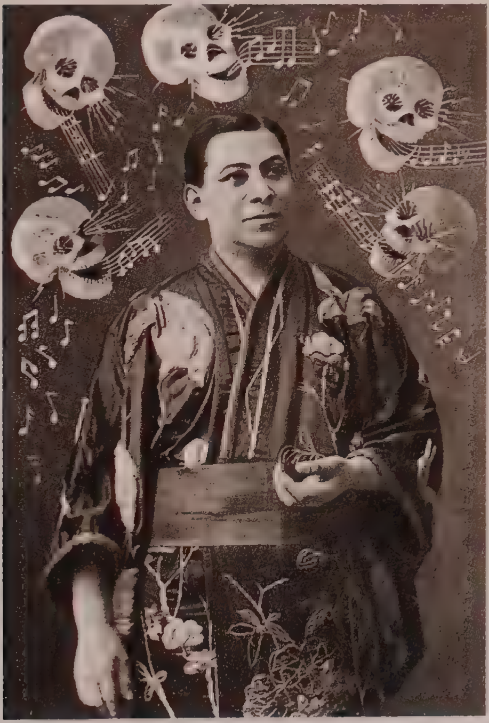
the railroad tracks were telegraph poles and wires that provided instant communication between cities. It was the combination of these essential elements that paved the way for the unbridled success of vaudeville. As steam power and, later, electric power was harnessed to operate factories, people started moving to the cities for work. A whole new class of citizen was created: the middle class. For the first time, regular folks had leisure time and some money in their pockets, a fact that was not missed by the showmen and show-women of the world. Theaters that featured wholesome shows intended for the whole family were constructed in all parts of the civilized world, and the race was on to fill the stages with suitable acts.

The turn of the century saw magicians who'd always been general practitioners now presenting specialized or themed acts. Fortune-tellers had been around for centuries, but performers such as Samri S. Baldwin, "the White Mahatma," with his apparent ability to psychically answer questions posed by the audience, and Anna Eva Fay and the Davenport Brothers, with their respective spirit cabinets, opened the door for a tidal wave of mind readers to claim a spot next to their magician brethren on the variety stage.

Acts that consisted strictly of manipulating small objects, such as coins, cards, thimbles, billiard balls, and cigarettes, would have been ill suited for the stage were it not for the high degree of showmanship offered by each unique performer. Throughout the first four decades of the 20th century, Swedish-born Nate Leipzig, for example, would invite a couple of spectators from the audience onstage to witness the tiniest of close-up tricks while the audience watched. It was the simplicity of the effects and the expressions of disbelief on the surrogates' faces that helped Leipzig win the audience over (p. 487). José Frakson, from Spain, became famous during the 1920s by manipulating lit cigarettes, and enjoyed a successful career into the 1970s (p. 522). England's Carlton, born Arthur Philps in 1881, performed the simplest of tricks accompanied by sidesplitting patter. An elongated skullcap exaggerated his skinny physique to the point that he eventually called himself "the Human Hairpin" (p. 496). In an effort to maximize their appeal, these performers strove to distinguish themselves by creating acts that were different.

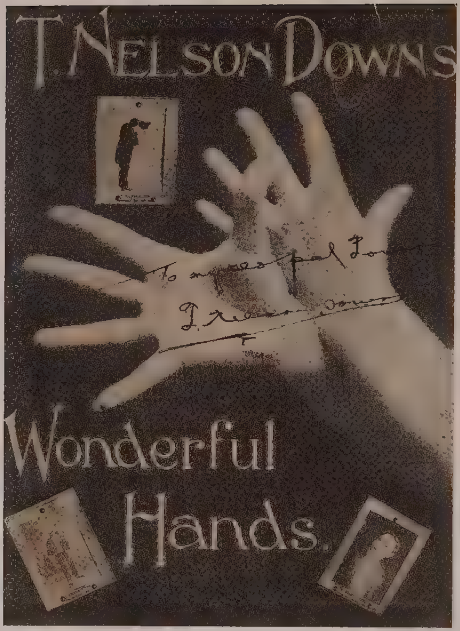
All of these performers were fortunate to be working in first-rate variety theaters, such as the Wintergarten in Berlin, the Ronacher in Vienna, the London Palladium, New York's Palace, the Tivoli Theatres of Australia, and





ABOVE: **ca. 1885** Even before Ching Ling Foo's arrival in the West, British magician Charles de Vere created a Japanese-style magic act for his wife, Julia. Audiences found a woman performing classic Oriental-style magic, such as the paper-butterfly trick and Linking Rings, most appealing. The de Veres' daughter, Clementine, also toured briefly, as Ionia, with an elaborate Egyptian-style illusion show (pp. 374–377).

LEFT: **ca. 1898** Japan certainly had a rich magic culture, but most Japanese-style magicians traveling in the West were impostors. Even his fellow magicians were not aware that Soto Sunetaro was actually American-born Wellington King Tobias. To help protect his true identity, Sunetaro never spoke a word on stage.



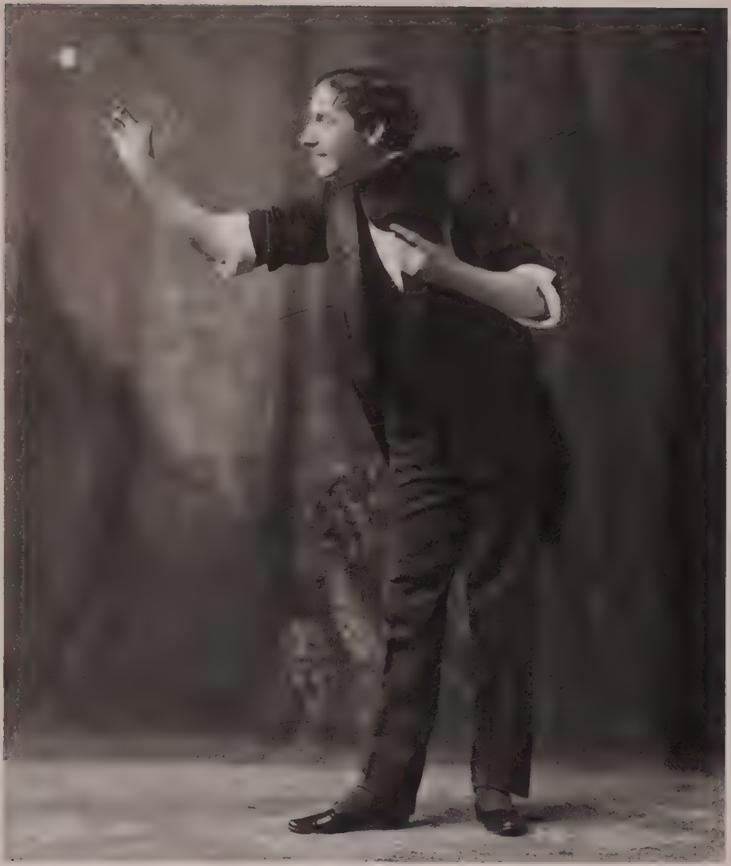
the Paris Olympia. But these high-class venues represented only the top layer of variety's vast hierarchy. There also existed a whole netherworld of second-, third-, and fourth-class so-called "palaces of amusement," the lowest rung being a vacant storefront with a platform at one end and folding chairs or benches on the floor. The performing conditions in these bare-bones venues were meager, and the pay was even less—usually just enough to cover room and board plus train fare to the next town. What these glamourless facilities did provide for the thousands of acts that languished in them was hope—hope that the experiences gained there would eventually lead to fame and fortune in bigger and better venues.

By the 1920s, vaudeville, music hall, and variety represented the foremost means by which human beings entertained themselves. It is hard to believe that, even then, the factors that would eventually kill off the entire industry—film, phonographs, and radio—were not only in place, but were actually flourishing, largely because of vaudeville's enormous success. Magicians were some of the first, for example, to publicly exhibit short silent films. David Devant had a projector installed at the back of John Nevil Maskelyne's Egyptian Hall in 1896 and started featuring animated pictures as part of their show. But once those innocent moving pictures became feature-length talkies, they would contribute mightily to the demise of variety entertainment. Live theaters all over the world started converting dressing rooms into storage rooms, and the appearance of a white movie screen hanging over a stage was, for the variety acts, analogous to a black funeral cloth. Now, instead of paying a week's wages to eight or 10 polished acts, a schoolboy was trained to run a film projector.

An even more severe blow was delivered in 1926, when the National Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) established the first radio network. The inaugural broadcast featured Weber & Fields, Eddie Cantor, and Will Rogers—all established vaudeville stars. And because it was possible to entertain millions of people simply by standing in front of a microphone, salaries for these new radio stars reached heretofore unimagined levels. The public now had a choice. They could dress up, ride the streetcar downtown and buy a ticket to the vaudeville show, or stay home and listen to the radio for free. For the few performers who were able to make the transition from the stage to the microphone, it was a gold mine, but for the thousands who could not, it was yet another devastating blow to their livelihoods.

OPPOSITE LEFT: **ca. 1905** Like dozens of his contemporaries, Carlton (Arthur Philps) was a skilled card manipulator. To set himself apart, he wore black tights and a skullcap and infused his act with comic patter. As Carlton "the Human Hairpin," he enjoyed a long career but, like so many vaudevillians, died in poverty.

OPPOSITE RIGHT AND RIGHT: **ca. 1900** Growing up in Iowa, T. Nelson Downs practiced coin manipulations for hours, and soon developed an entire act based on his incredible sleight of hand. He was the first to produce coins from the air, right, and this single trick, the Miser's Dream, made him a vaudeville star. His success was so great that dozens of copycat "Koin Kings" emerged throughout the world of vaudeville and music halls.

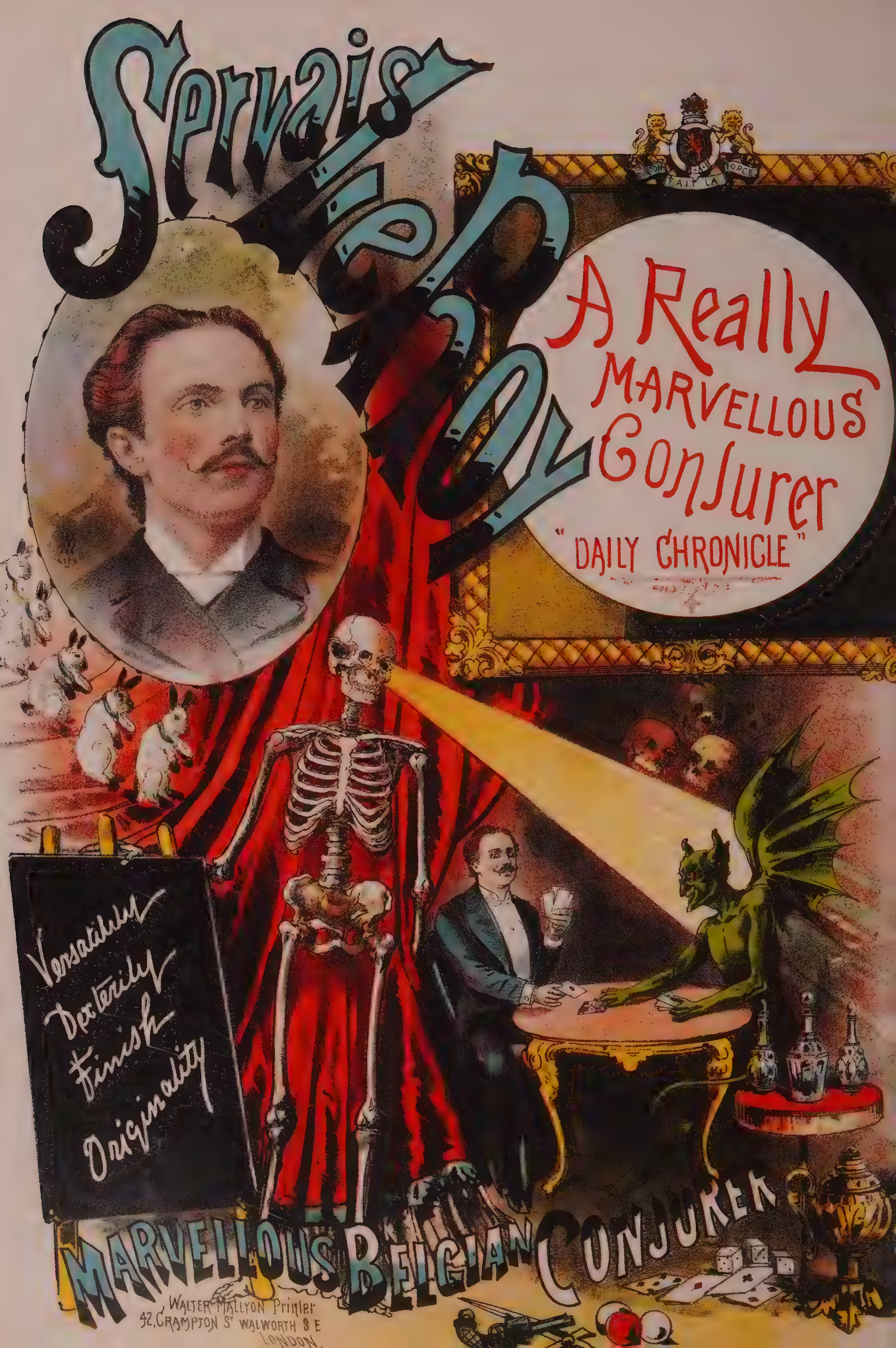


Movies & Radio Move In

With other forms of entertainment gaining momentum during the late 1920s and early 1930s, it became increasingly apparent that vaudeville was losing its battle for the public's attention. Movies and radio shows could start in the morning, run all day long, and never get tired. Vaudeville fought back with continuous shows that had no beginning and no end. Patrons would purchase a ticket, sit down and start watching. When the act they had seen first appeared again, it was time to go home. Performers were spending all day in the theater, doing four and five shows per day—a demoralizing schedule. Another prophetic sign occurred in 1926, when *Billboard* moved its vaudeville news from the front pages to the back pages in one dramatic sweep. The lead stories in what had always been the vaudevillians' bible were now news reports from Hollywood. As the Roaring Twenties ended with a crash that emanated from Wall Street, a new version of vaudeville arrived in the form of presentation houses. Here, live acts were presented between screenings of feature films. Not only were fewer acts finding work, but performers now had to match the energy of inexhaustible reels of film. Presentation houses represented just another step in the long, slow decline of vaudeville.

The oft-asked question is, "When did vaudeville actually die?" Some would point to 1927, the year in which *The Jazz Singer*, starring Al Jolson, officially ushered in the era of sound film. Others have pointed to 1932, the year New York's Palace Theater, the flagship of Keith-Albee's first-class circuit, discontinued its two-a-day policy. Some acts eventually departed for England and continental Europe, where they found variety entertainment putting up a more valiant fight. Australia managed to hold out even longer, with variety theaters remaining open into the 1950s.

As variety theaters were wired for sound and converted into movie theaters, or they just closed their doors completely, magicians were forced to look elsewhere for employment. For some, it was World War II that came to the rescue. Entertainments National Service Association (ENSA) in England and United Service Organizations (USO) in the United States provided steady employment to variety performers of all types by sending them to the far corners of the world to entertain the troops. Performances were given in mess halls, officers' clubs, and while standing on the back of flatbed trucks, but the audiences were reputedly some of the most appreciative these performers ever encountered.


Servais
le Roy
A Really
MARVELLOUS
Conjurer
"DAILY CHRONICLE"
UNION FAIT LA FORCE
Versatility
Dexterity
Finish
Originality
MARVELLOUS BELGIAN CONJURER

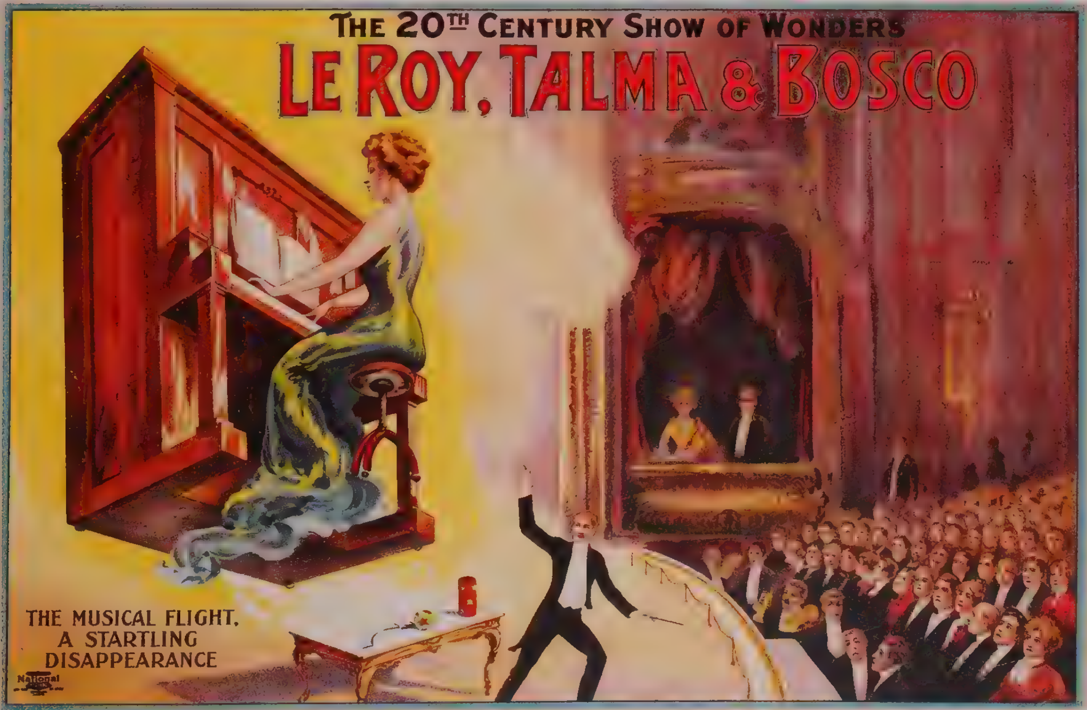
WALTER MALLYON Printer
42, CRAMPTON ST WALWORTH S E
LONDON

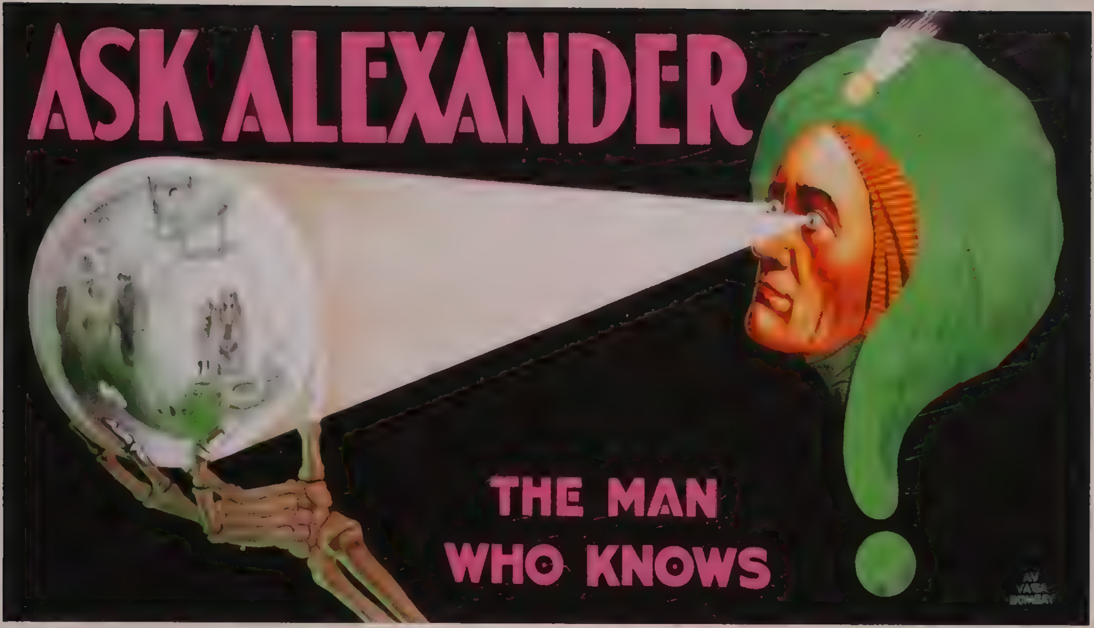
TALMA
LEROY-TALMA-BOSCO

OPPOSITE: **1900** Belgian-born vaudevillian Servais Le Roy was such a towering figure in magic that Harry Kellar called him the most finished artist he had ever seen, and Howard Thurston feared him as a rival. Many of Le Roy's greatest inventions, such as the Asrah levitation, are still eliciting gasps from audiences around the world.

BOTTOM: **ca. 1920** Servais Le Roy's greatest invention was the Asrah levitation, wherein a woman floated high into the air and then vanished. This later variation, a floating and vanishing piano and pianist, was a fantastic effect but, for reasons of practicality, did not become nearly as popular with magicians.

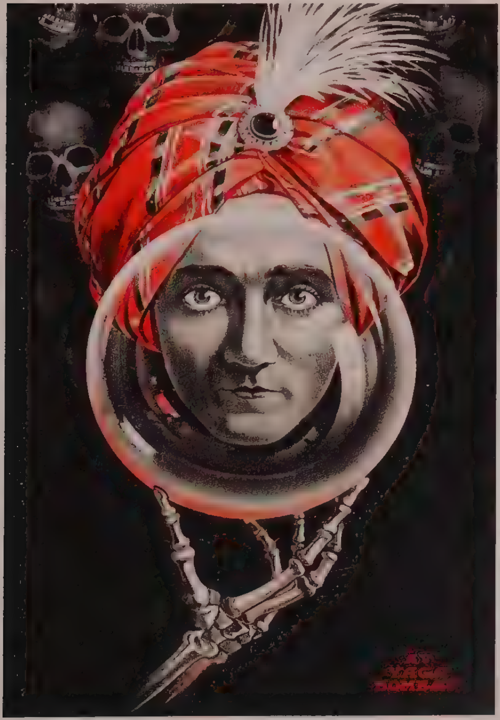
ABOVE AND RIGHT: **ca. 1900, ca. 1910, and 1904** Mary Ann Ford, above right, became Mercedes Talma, "the Queen of Coins," after marrying Servais Le Roy, above left. They enjoyed a 30-year career in vaudeville and were the most creative, skillful, and talented husband-and-wife team in the business. Leon Bosco, right, provided the comic relief. In one riotous effect, he would switch the heads on a live duck and rooster and then chase them around the stage.


THE 20TH CENTURY SHOW OF WONDERS
LE ROY, TALMA & BOSCO
THE MUSICAL FLIGHT.
A STARTLING
DISAPPEARANCE
National



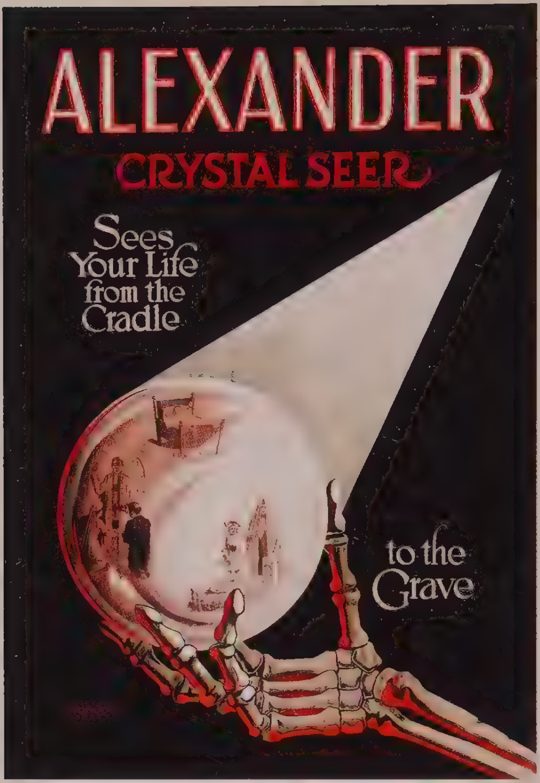
OPPOSITE: **ca. 1914** Alexander's elaborate costume, turban, and makeup disguised the fact that he was born in South Dakota. In 1921, theater magnate Alexander Pantages paid him $100,000 to appear in his chain of theaters for 20 weeks. By age 47, he retired from the stage having amassed an incredible fortune.

ABOVE AND BELOW: **1915** Alexander was a great believer in effective outdoor advertising. This massive poster, measuring nine by 16 feet, commanded attention from a great distance. During his performances, he used the crystal ball shown in these posters to answer questions about his audience members' pasts, presents, and futures.



Nightclub Performers Take Center Stage

With the cessation of hostilities in 1945, many European cities were faced with the formidable task of rebuilding. And around the globe, countries that had been spared the years of relentless bombing were looking for new ways to entertain themselves. Ironically, the industry that stepped in to fill this void was a throwback to the pre-vaudeville beer halls. But this time, the venues represented the epitome of class, and clientele arrived in tuxedos and gowns. The world of the nightclub had arrived. Once again, magicians found themselves adapting their performances to yet another new environment. Vaudeville theaters and music halls had offered ideal conditions in which to perform magic by confining the audience to a specific area in front of the stage, which allowed spectators to see only what the magicians wanted them to see. Areas in the wings, beneath the stage, and high up in the flies were out of sight, and therefore convenient hiding places. With the advent of nightclubs, all of those facilities that magicians had come to rely on suddenly evaporated. Performers were now asked to bring their props out onto the front of the bandstand and perform in front of the orchestra. In the higher-class hotels that had floor shows, acts were even required to perform in the


ALEXANDER
CRYSTAL SEER
Sees Your Life from the Cradle
to the Grave

LEFT: **1915** Like most mind readers, Alexander began his show-business career as a magician. When he discovered that audiences reacted favorably to his ability to answer questions about their own lives, he put his stage illusions into storage and became a full-time mentalist.

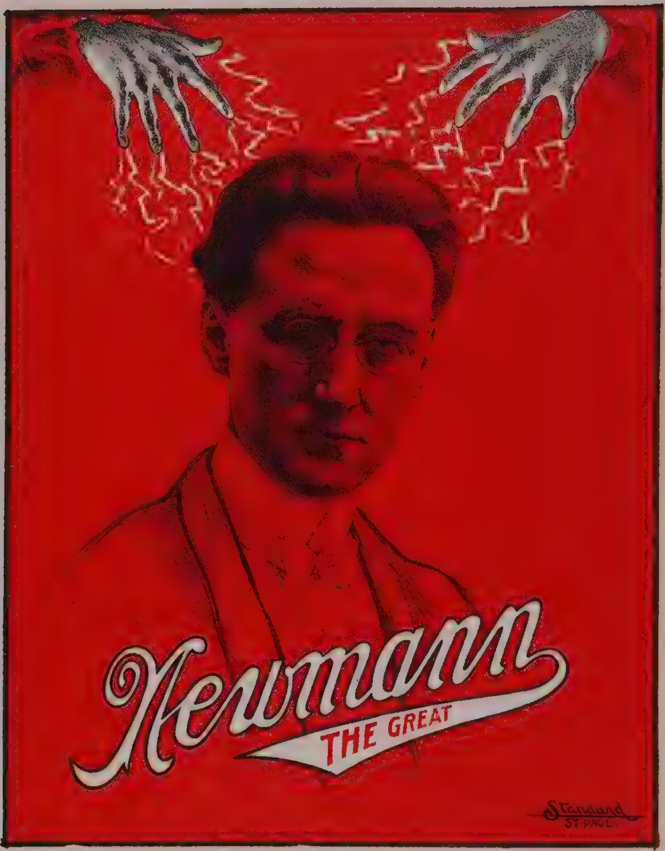
OPPOSITE: **1919** Hugh Murdock, seen here with an assistant, was a small-time magician who tried his luck in the mind-reading game. The costumes could be purchased off the rack, and the gimmicked slates and crystal balls were available from any number of reputable magic dealers.

middle of the dance floors, with the audience surrounding them on three sides. Some magicians deemed these new conditions impossible to cope with and simply laid down their wands and called it a career. Others did what they had always done: accepted the challenge and adapted. New tricks were devised and old ones were revamped, which ultimately resulted in a new breed of magician: the nightclub performer.

Canadian-born Dai Vernon created an act entirely of sleight of hand for nightclubs, but soon tired of the monotony. Producers wanted exactly the same act every night, without a variance of 30 seconds. Vernon, a lifelong student of the art, concentrated on the study of close-up magic, and for years performed right at the nightclub tables for small groups of customers (pp. 520–521). During these intimate performances, Vernon was free to choose different routines from his vast repertoire and personalize the show for each table in the same way a jazz musician might improvise. By living for an astonishing 98 years, the Professor (as Vernon became known) was able to dramatically influence magic for most of the 20th century. His theories on performing in a natural manner by eliminating even the slightest suspicious movement helped to revolutionize the art.

OPPOSITE BOTTOM LEFT: **1922** New Orleans-born Rajah Raboid (Maurice Kitchen) lived the role of psychic wonder both on and off the stage. His show included a heart-pounding knife-throwing act in which he was blindfolded throughout the ordeal. Most mentalists generated publicity by driving a car while blindfolded; Raboid sometimes upped the ante by flying an airplane instead.

OPPOSITE BOTTOM RIGHT: **ca. 1926** Even with a packed theater, Rajah Raboid could only entertain about 1,000 people per night. By taking his act to the radio, he was able to demonstrate his psychic power to hundreds of thousands of listeners across many states. His request that listeners send in 25 cents and have their personal questions answered on the air produced an avalanche of mail, not to mention a mountain of quarters.

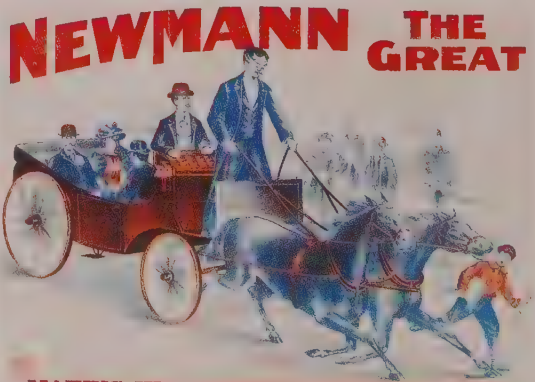


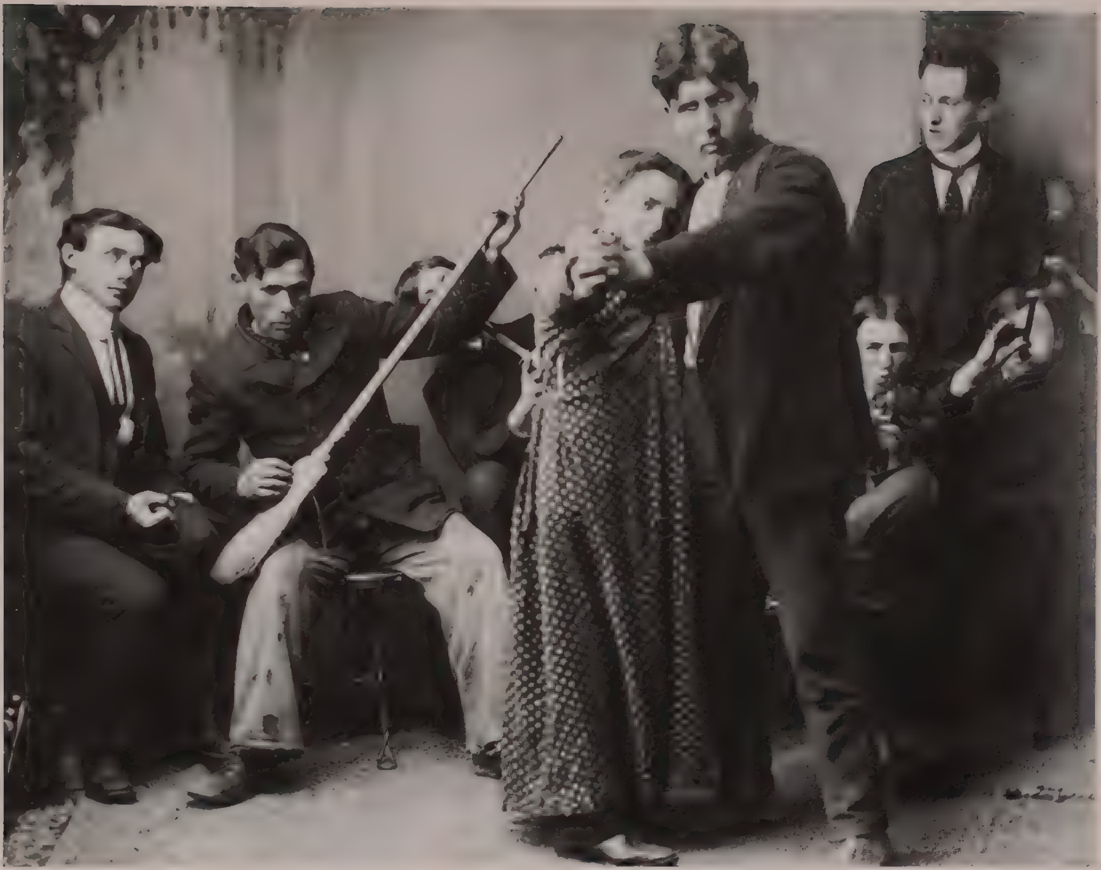
LEFT: **ca. 1905** At the age of 17, Newmann the Great sold off his magic equipment and became a full-time mind reader and hypnotist. The thought of transporting less equipment, the potentially huge profits, and the public's keen interest in psychic phenomena made the change irresistible.

BELOW: **ca. 1905** Christian Andrew George Naeseth chose Newmann the Great as his stage name after witnessing a performance by Herrmann the Great. Progress was slow coming to Newmann's home state of Minnesota, however, so it is not surprising that his first blindfold drives were taken in a horse-drawn carriage. For more than 50 years, he used a variety of publicity stunts to help fill theaters.

The acts that most successfully made the transition from vaudeville to nightclubs hit the jackpot when they started opening for major stars. Jack Kodell specialized in magic with parakeets, and, in 1947, became the first magician to perform in Las Vegas. The 19-year-old appeared for six weeks at the El Rancho Hotel, one of the three hotels that comprised the Strip at the time. Jay Marshall used his witty patter and simple tricks to warm up the audience for Frank Sinatra at the Desert Inn in 1951, while Channing Pollock rocketed to stardom and eventually toured with Liberace during 1967, performing faultless sleight of hand with playing cards and doves (p. 524). When the lavish Lido de Paris show arrived in this desert oasis in 1958, audiences sat stunned as Mr. Electric (Marvyn Roy) pulled a seemingly endless string of illuminated light bulbs out of his mouth (p. 525). For decades the Vegas revue shows provided long contracts to conjurers who presented magic in a modern and visual manner.

Some magicians who specialized in mind reading became quite comfortable plying their trade over the radio. Mel Roy (Wilbert Willis Holley) attempted to follow in the lucrative footsteps of Claude Conlin, a.k.a. Alexander ("the Man Who Knows"), who had become wealthy during the years 1914 to 1927 by psychically answering questions during his vaudeville shows. After Mel Roy moved his act to the radio, he was inundated with letters (each containing the requisite dollar bill) from listeners anxious for a peek into their futures. New York–born Joseph Dunninger was another vaudeville magician turned mind-reader who enjoyed his greatest success on the radio. During the 1940s, listeners could tune in each week and hear the self proclaimed "World's Greatest Mentalist" reveal the in-

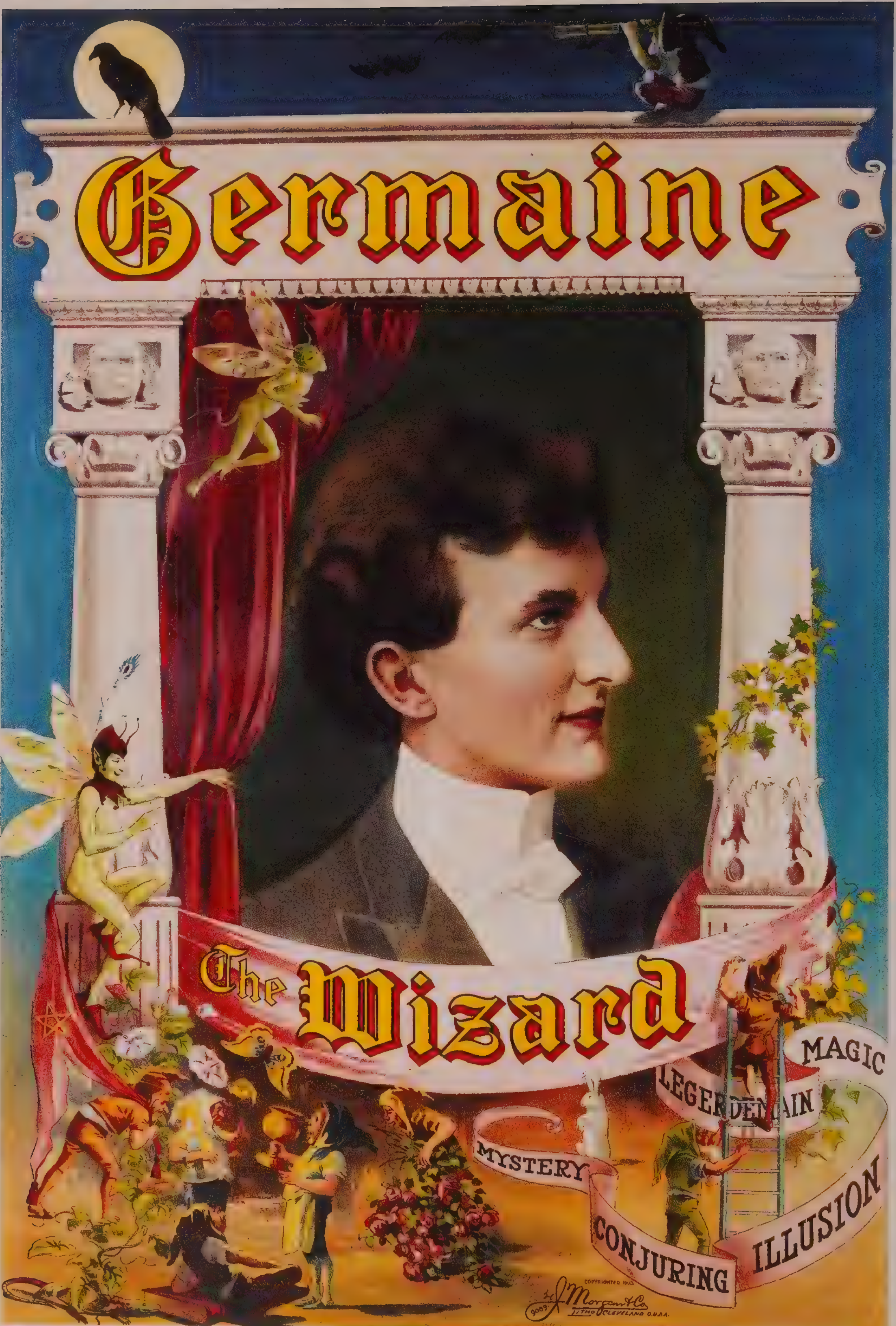

NEWMANN THE GREAT
MAKING HIS FAMOUS BLINDFOLD DRIVE



nermost thoughts of people in his studio audience. On the other side of the Atlantic, Australian-born husband-and-wife mentalist team Sydney and Lesley Piddington became stars by demonstrating their psychic powers on the radio under increasingly impossible conditions. Once, while in a BBC studio, Lesley successfully divined an entire sentence being concentrated on by Sydney, who was being held miles away in the Tower of London.

ABOVE: **ca. 1910** Unlike his contemporaries, Newmann performed in a business suit and structured his act as a college professor might, though his show was anything but serious. Here, two men (one in a dress) dance as the "orchestra" accompanies them, all while in a hypnotic trance.

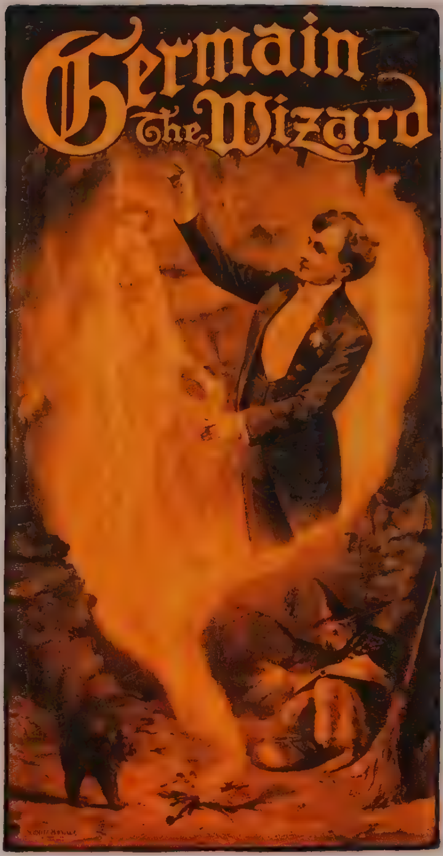
RIGHT: **ca. 1926** Joseph Dunninger, a lifelong New Yorker, prepares to drive a car through heavy traffic while blindfolded. He was a success in vaudeville, but his ultimate fame was the result of a radio show and later a television show where he read the minds of his studio audience.


Germaine
The Wizard
MAGIC
LEGERDEMAIN
MYSTERY
CONJURING
ILLUSION
COPYRIGHTED 1905
9059
The J. Morgan & Co.
LITHO CLEVELAND O.U.S.A.

OPPOSITE: **1903** Above all else, Karl Germain was an artist to his fingertips. His props and clothes were meticulously maintained, and his advertising epitomized elegance. Early in his career he spelled his name Germaine, as in this poster, but dropped the final *e* after a tour of England.

RIGHT: **ca. 1910** Like so many magicians, Karl Germain included the Spirit Cabinet illusion in his show due to the worldwide interest in Spiritualism. The purpose of this evocative poster, measuring nearly seven feet tall, was to convince the public that the only thing separating them from an encounter with the spirits was the price of a ticket.

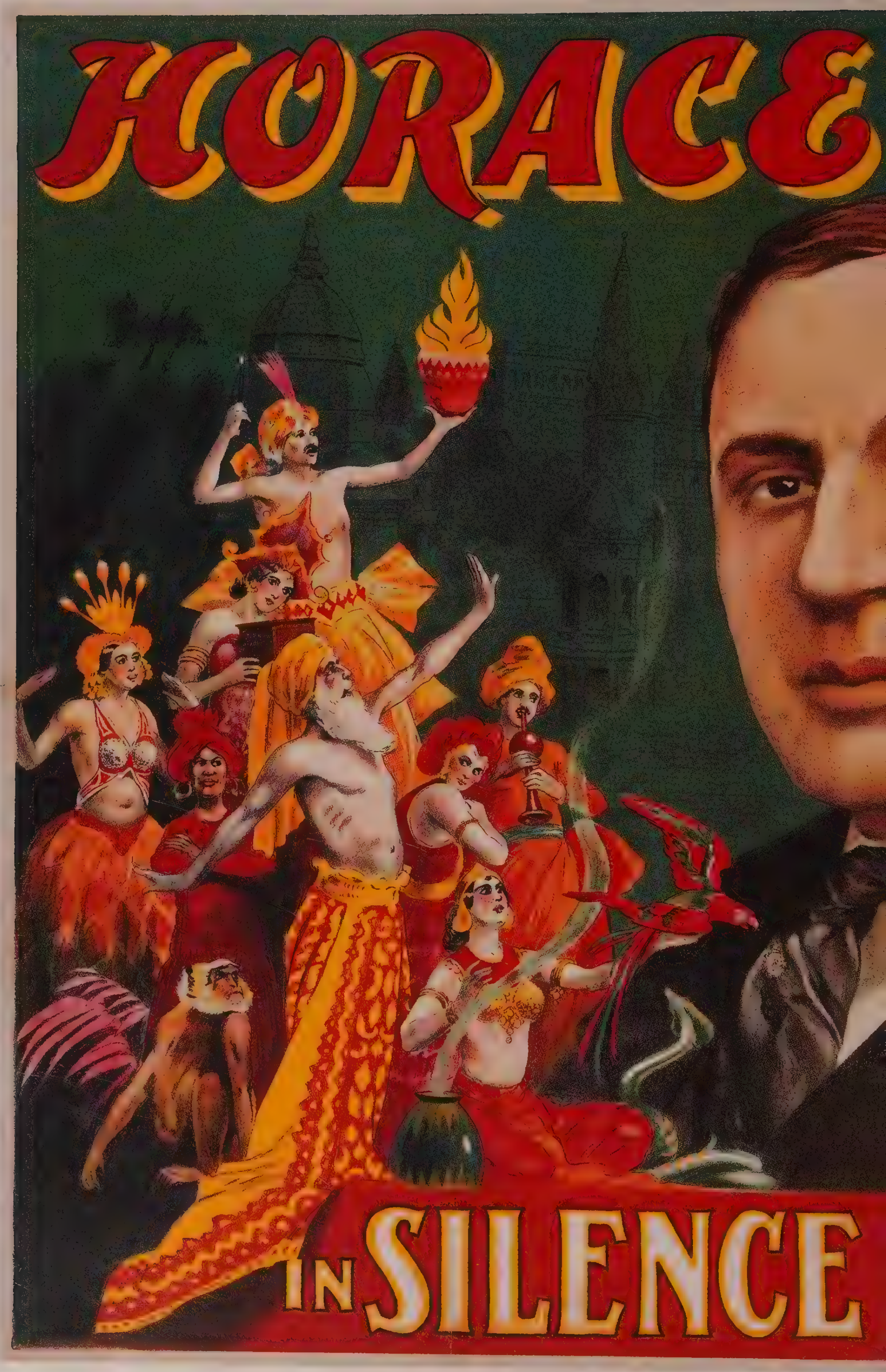
PAGES 508–509: **1925** Though Horace Goldin was born in Vilna, Russia (today Lithuania), and grew up in Nashville, Tennessee, from the moment he became a stage illusionist he was a citizen of the world. His title, "the Royal Illusionist," was the result of his many performances before kings, queens, and potentates.

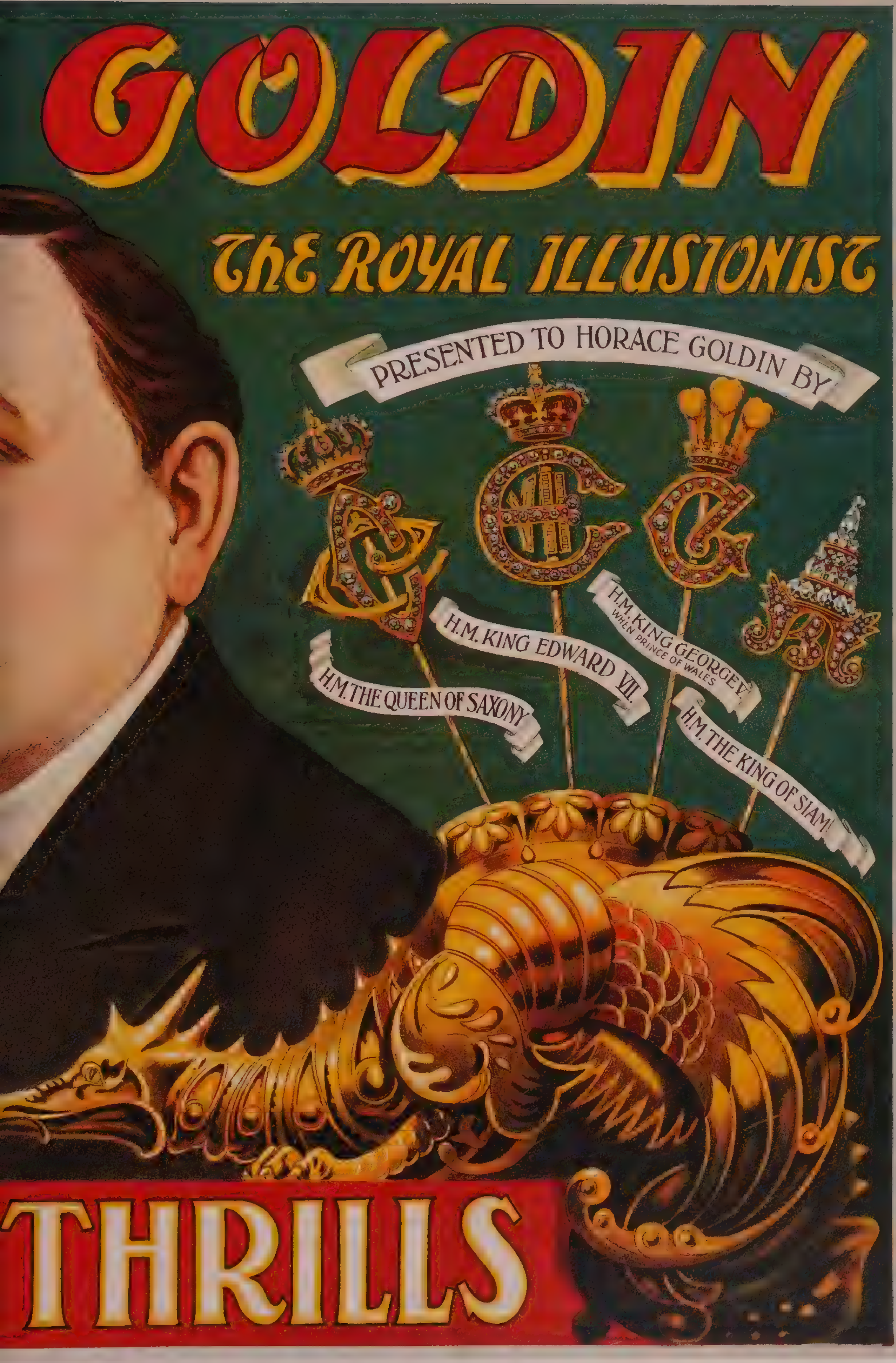


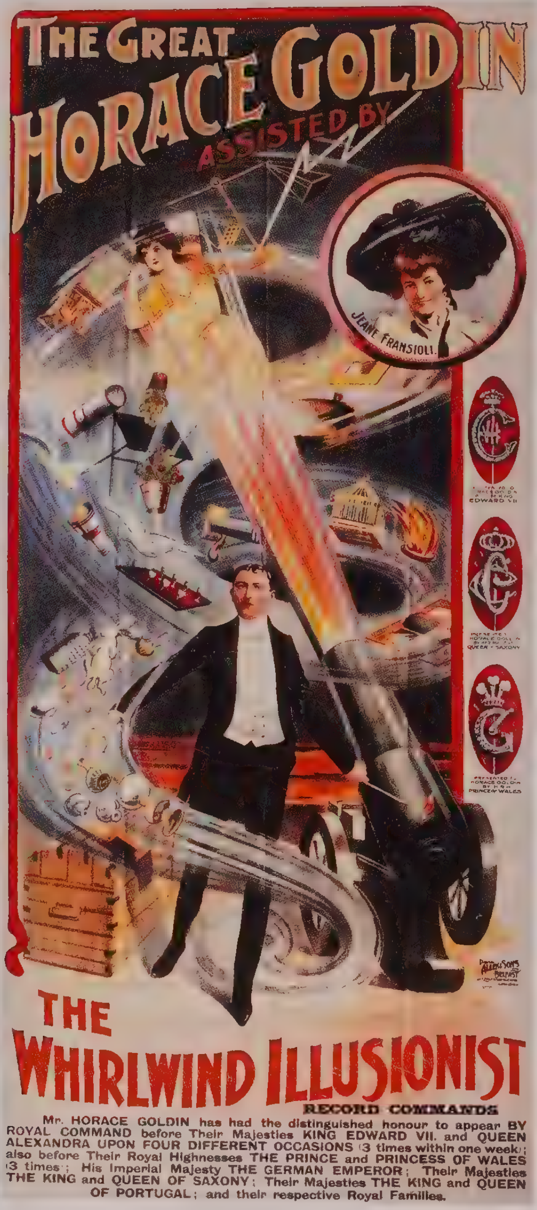
An Ancient Art Perpetually Reborn

Rather than being the final nail in the coffin, television actually allowed vaudeville to remain on life support for a few more years. *The Ed Sullivan Show*, *The Hollywood Palace*, and *Saturday Night at the London Palladium* featured aging vaudevillians and younger variety performers who simply refused to give up. While an early generation of vaudeville magicians had dreamed of appearing at the Palace Theater in New York City, this final generation of vaudevillians now dreamed of appearing on a television variety show. But it didn't take long for seasoned performers to discover the downside of television's voracious appetite. Magicians spent years perfecting every second of their 12-minute act through thousands of performances in front of live audiences. Each moment, each line, and every movement was carefully choreographed for maximum entertainment. Once perfected, a magician could present his finely honed act for the rest of his life, each night in front of a different audience. But a single television broadcast allowed more viewers to watch an act in one night than had seen it during 20 years of vaudeville performances. And the following week television was hungry for something new. Feeding this insatiable monster became an impossibility.

By the 1960s, more and more airtime was being allocated to rock-and-roll acts and less to magical stars. The symbolic passing of the baton from variety acts to rock and roll occurred on February 9, 1964, when 73 million viewers tuned in to *The Ed Sullivan Show* to see the Beatles. Minutes before Sullivan welcomed the Fab Four to America, he introduced what many experts consider the greatest all-around magician of his generation, Fred Kaps. This Dutchman's brilliant routine, along with the last remnants of vaudeville, was buried under the tidal wave of screams and applause that greeted the Beatles onstage. The generation that came of age during the 1960s was determined to reshape the face of show business, and magic was forced to once again reinvent itself. The rebirth of this ancient art would require a full 10-year gestation period, but, in 1974, Canadian-born Doug Henning hoisted the sleeping giant onto his slender back and carried magic back onto a New York City stage in the form of a Broadway musical, a runaway hit called *The Magic Show*. Thus began magic's next golden age, which continues to resonate today.


HORACE
IN SILENCE

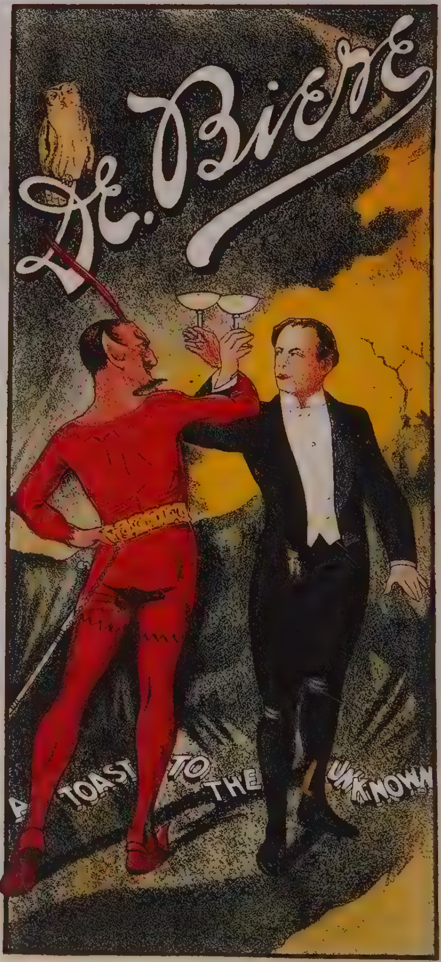

GOLDIN
THE ROYAL ILLUSIONIST
PRESENTED TO HORACE GOLDIN BY
H.M. THE QUEEN OF SAXONY
H.M. KING EDWARD VII.
H.M. KING GEORGE V. WHEN PRINCE OF WALES
H.M. THE KING OF SIAM.
THRILLS



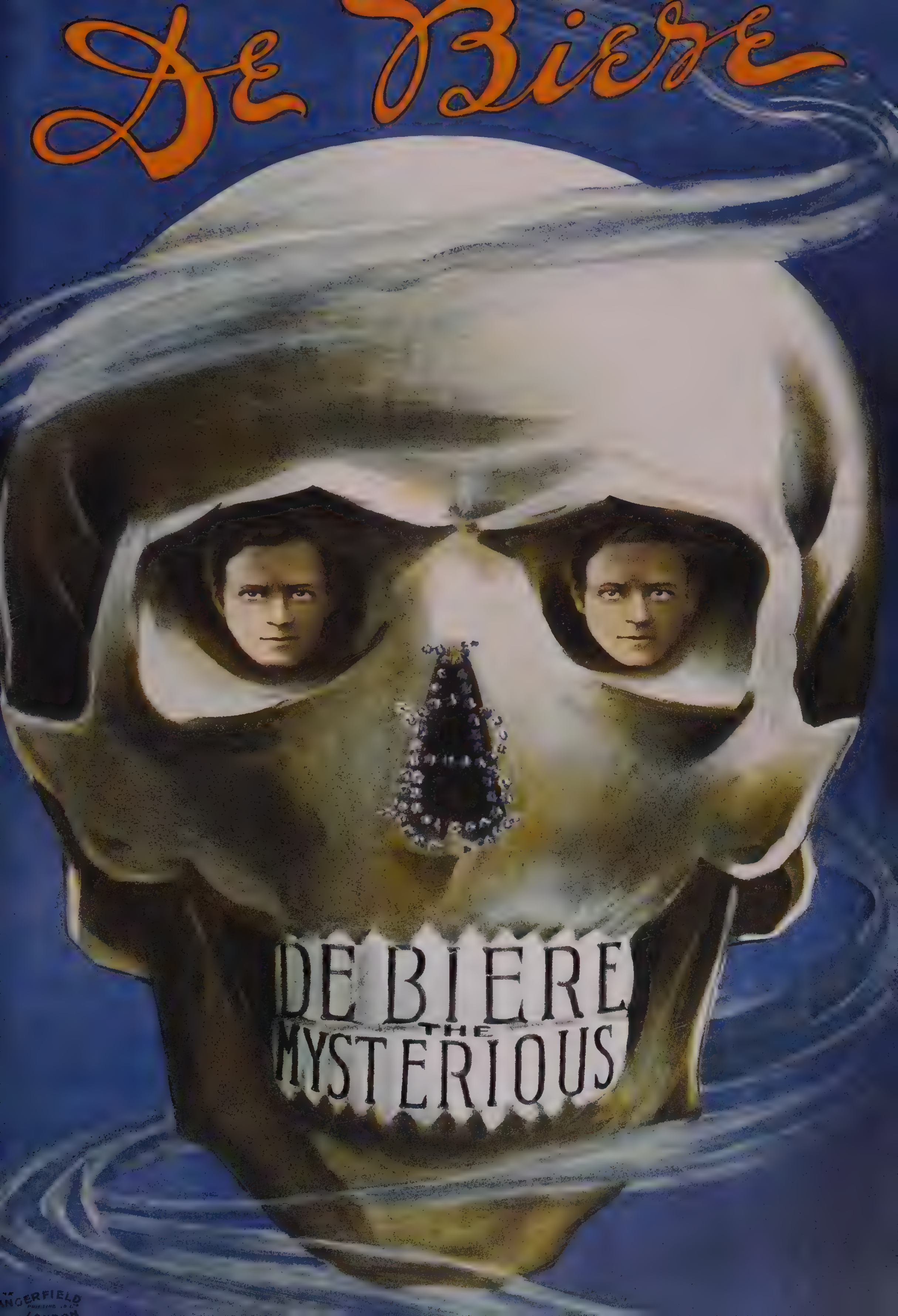
Mr. HORACE GOLDIN has had the distinguished honour to appear BY ROYAL COMMAND before Their Majesties KING EDWARD VII. and QUEEN ALEXANDRA UPON FOUR DIFFERENT OCCASIONS (3 times within one week); also before Their Royal Highnesses THE PRINCE and PRINCESS OF WALES (3 times); His Imperial Majesty THE GERMAN EMPEROR; Their Majesties THE KING and QUEEN OF SAXONY; Their Majesties THE KING and QUEEN OF PORTUGAL; and their respective Royal Families.

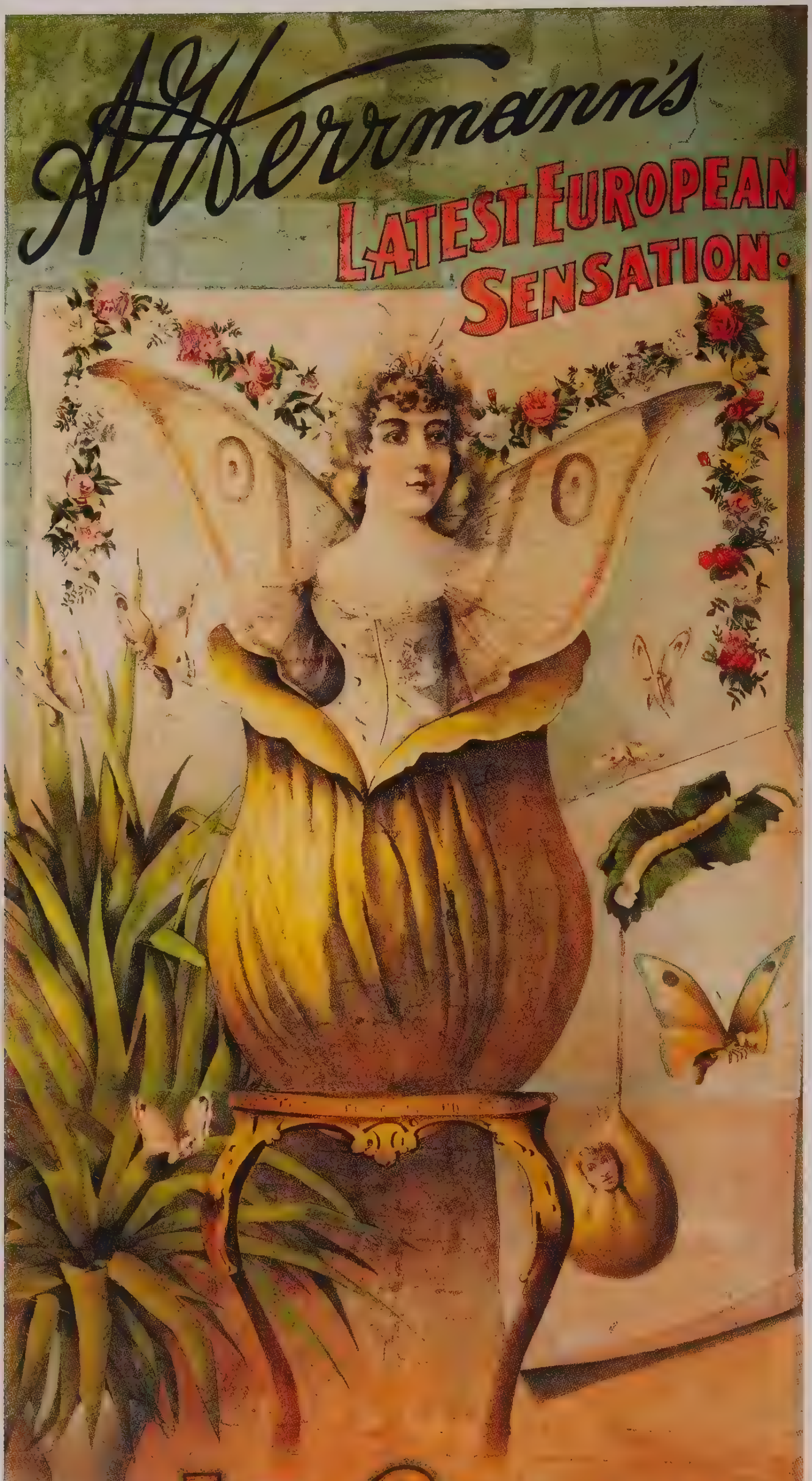
LEFT: **ca. 1907** Goldin seemingly spent as much time in court protecting his original illusions from unscrupulous competitors as he did performing them on stage. The illusion featured on this poster involved a woman being fired out of a cannon, only to reappear inside the smallest of three nested trunks. Goldin immediately obtained a U.S. patent for the cannon illusion as well as for his version of the classic Sawing a Lady in Half.

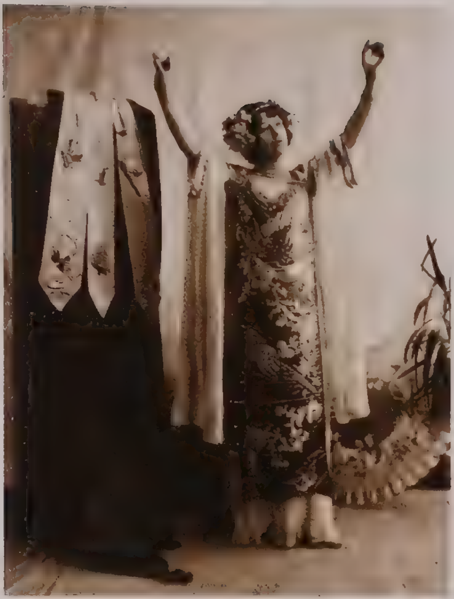
OPPOSITE: **ca. 1910** This fantastic poster advertising Arnold de Biere was in some ways its own illusion. When viewed from a distance, one would not have noticed that the teeth spell out "De Biere the Mysterious" and that the eyeballs are actually de Biere's face. His initials, A. D. B., have been integrated into the nose.


De. Biere
A TOAST TO THE UNKNOWN

RIGHT: **ca. 1910** Arnold de Biere was one of the magicians Horace Goldin threatened to sue for performing his cannon trick. Unfazed, de Biere placed an advertisement in a theatrical journal calling Goldin a "fat-headed bluff." De Biere, seen here toasting the Devil, began his career with a simple act of small magic, then graduated to a massive illusion show with a company of 32, and finally returned to a one-man act to finish out his career.

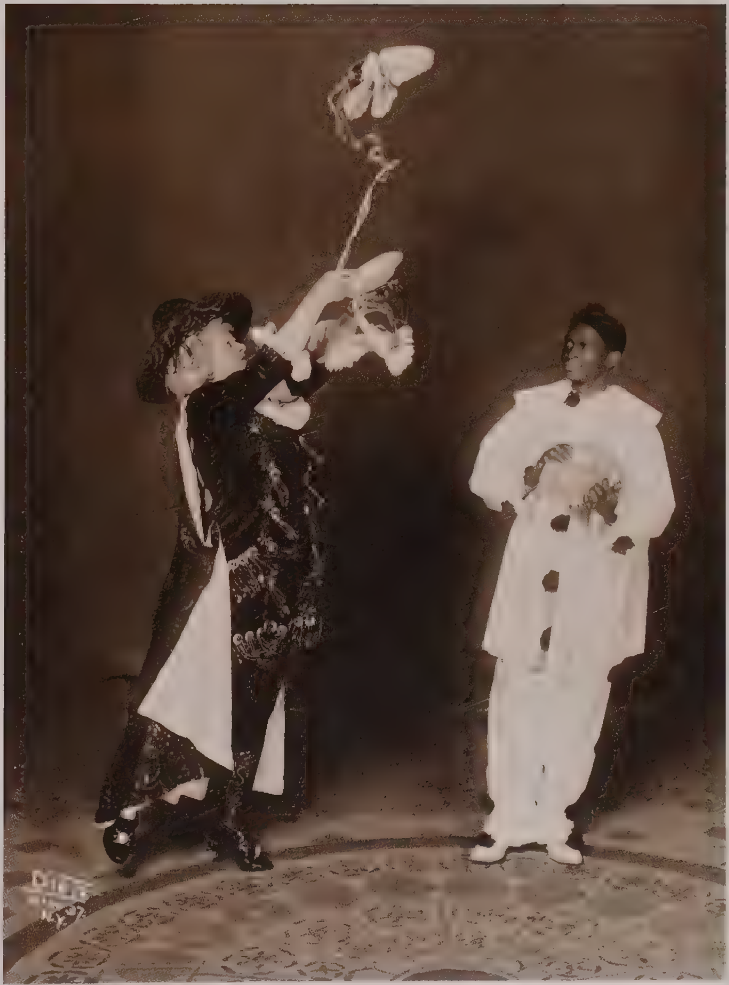

De Biere
DE BIERE
THE
MYSTERIOUS
ANGERFIELD
PRINTING CO
LONDON


A. Herrmann's
LATEST EUROPEAN SENSATION.
LE COCON
The Forbes Company. Boston & N.Y.

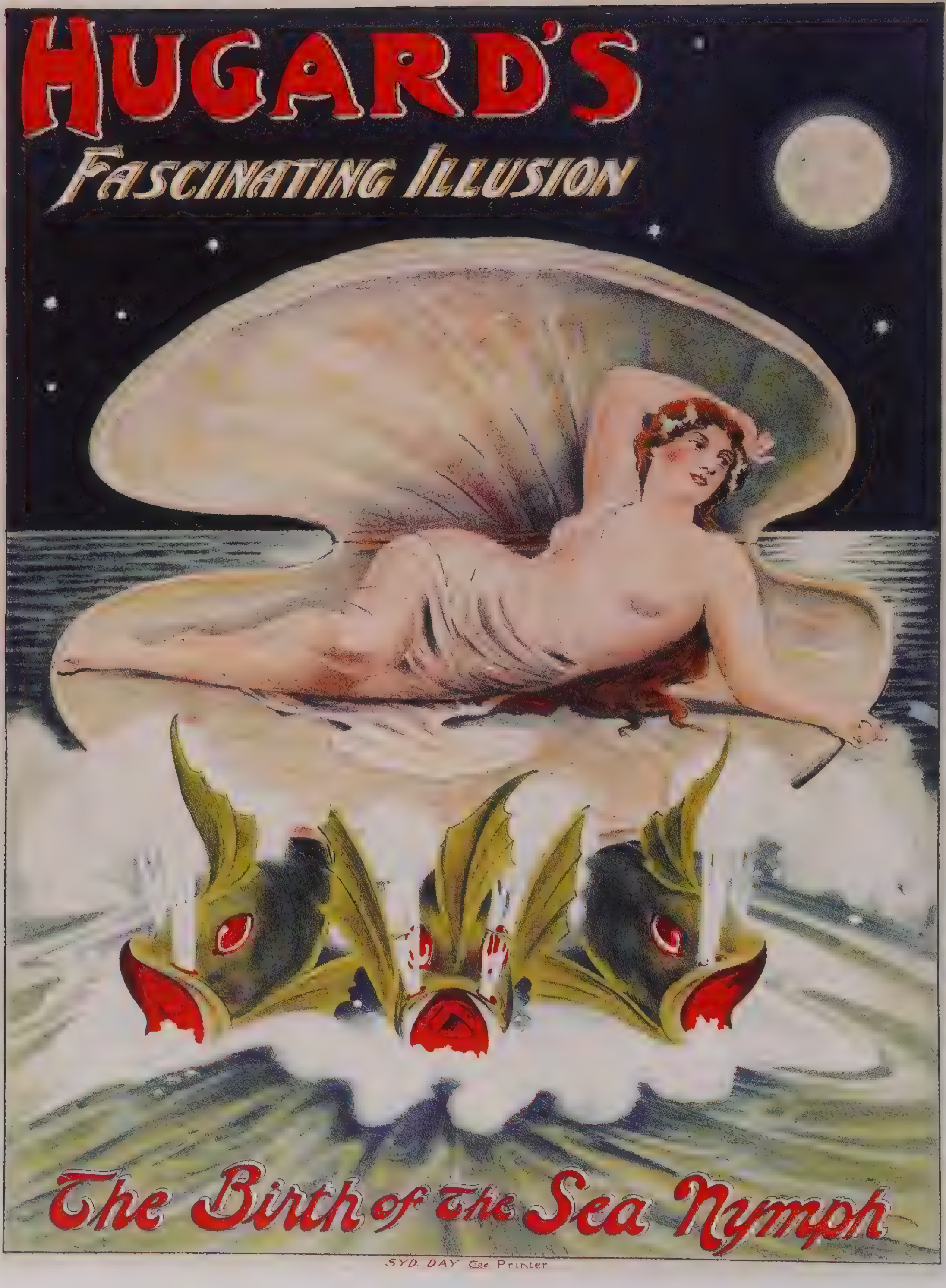


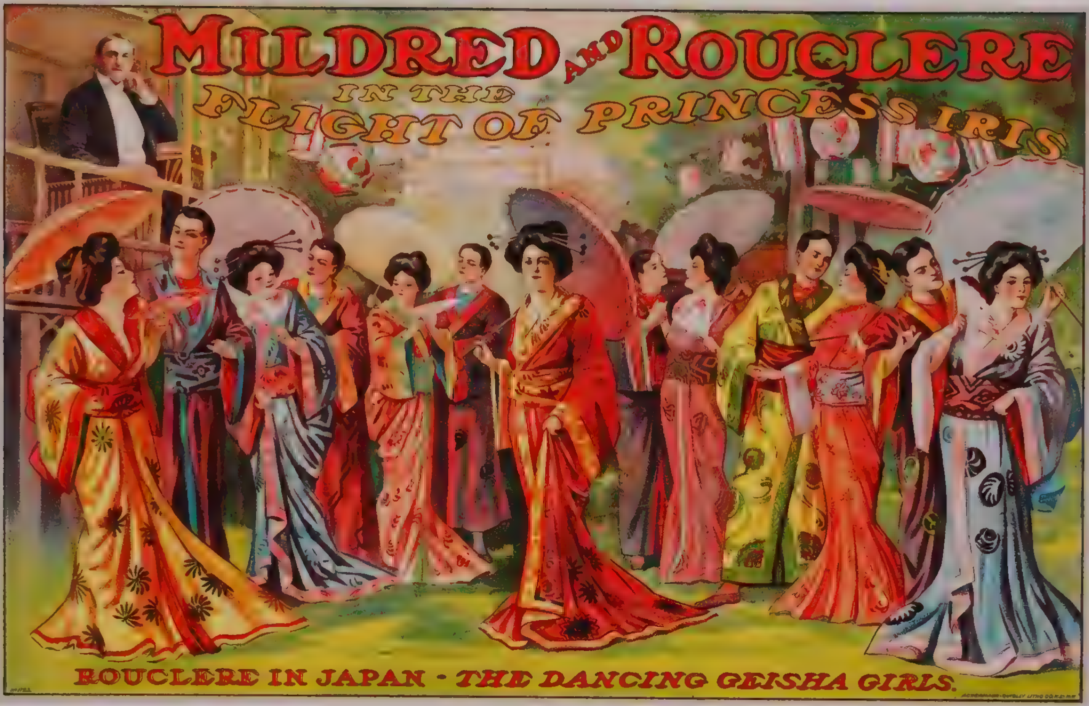
OPPOSITE: **ca. 1887** Adelaide Scarsez began her show-business career as a dancer in Britain's music halls. Upon becoming Mrs. Alexander Herrmann, she performed at the side of one of the world's greatest magicians. In the illusion depicted here, Le Cocon, the "Latest European Sensation," Alexander Herrmann would paint a silkworm on a suspended piece of paper, from which Adelaide would emerge in a butterfly costume.

LEFT: **ca. 1900** Adelaide Herrmann was just 42 years old when her famous husband died in 1896. The theater was all she had known throughout her life. She went on to perform in vaudeville with her own act for more than 30 years and retired only when her entire show was destroyed in a warehouse fire.



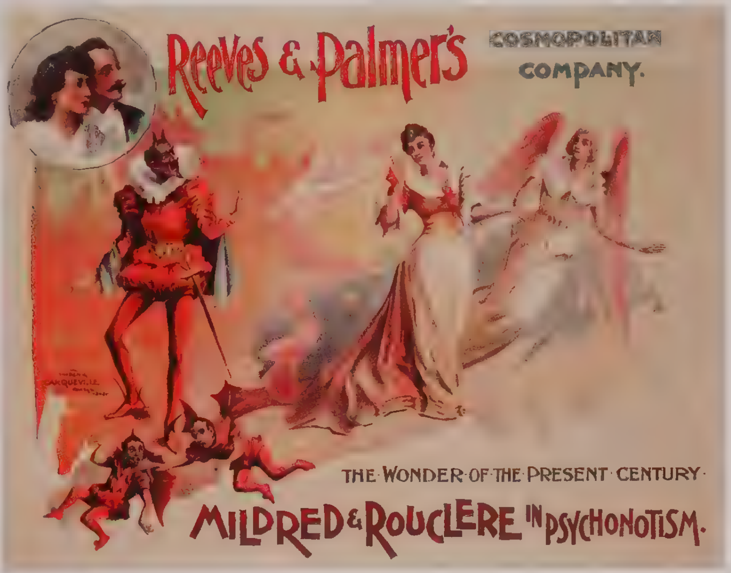
RIGHT: **1910** Always anxious to bring her audiences something new, in this year Adelaide Herrmann introduced an act called Cagliostro the Master of Mysteries. *The Magical World* magazine said, "This newest of Mlle. Herrmann's acts [is] the best that she has ever given to vaudeville." Alexander Herrmann had always employed an African American boy as his assistant, and, thus, so did Adelaide.


HUGARD'S
FASCINATING ILLUSION
The Birth of the Sea Nymph
SYD. DAY Gen Printer

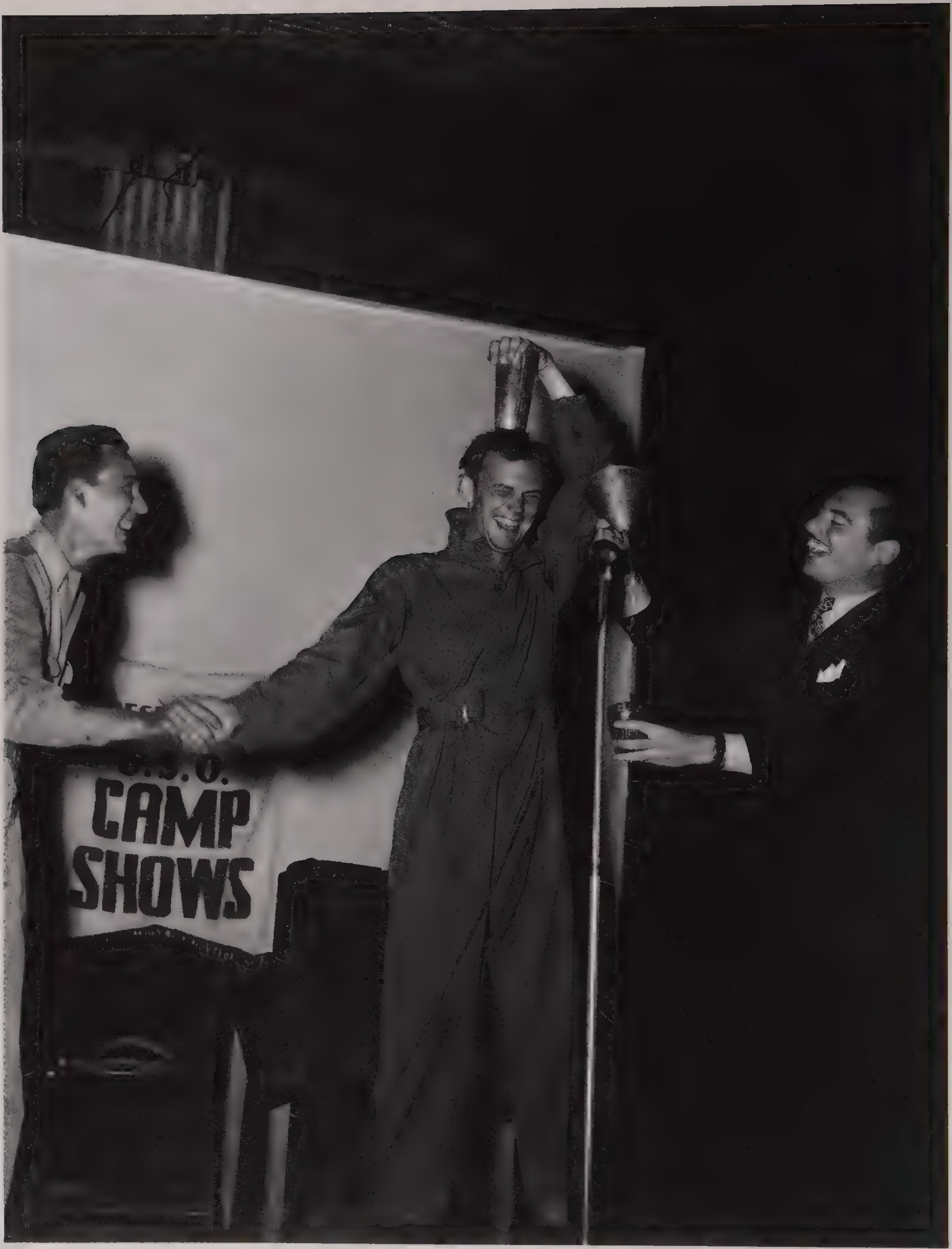

MILDRED AND ROUCLERE
IN THE
FLIGHT OF PRINCESS IRIS
ROUCLERE IN JAPAN - THE DANCING GEISHA GIRLS.

OPPOSITE: **ca. 1920** Raised in Australia, Jean Hugard started his career as Chin Sun Loo, yet another "Chinese" magician. Ironically, it was William Ellsworth Robinson (later Chung Ling Soo) who was the mastermind behind this illusion earlier in his career. In the Birth of the Sea Nymph, a woman appears inside a giant oyster shell.

ABOVE: **ca. 1897** Throughout their career, Mildred and Rouclere were known for their beautiful posters. To create this magnificent example of lithography, produced by the Ackermann-Quigley Company to advertise the illusion the Flight of Princess Iris, a separate slab of limestone was used to print each different color.


Reeves & Palmer's
COSMOPOLITAN
COMPANY.
THE WONDER OF THE PRESENT CENTURY
MILDRED & ROUCLERE IN PSYCHONOTISM.

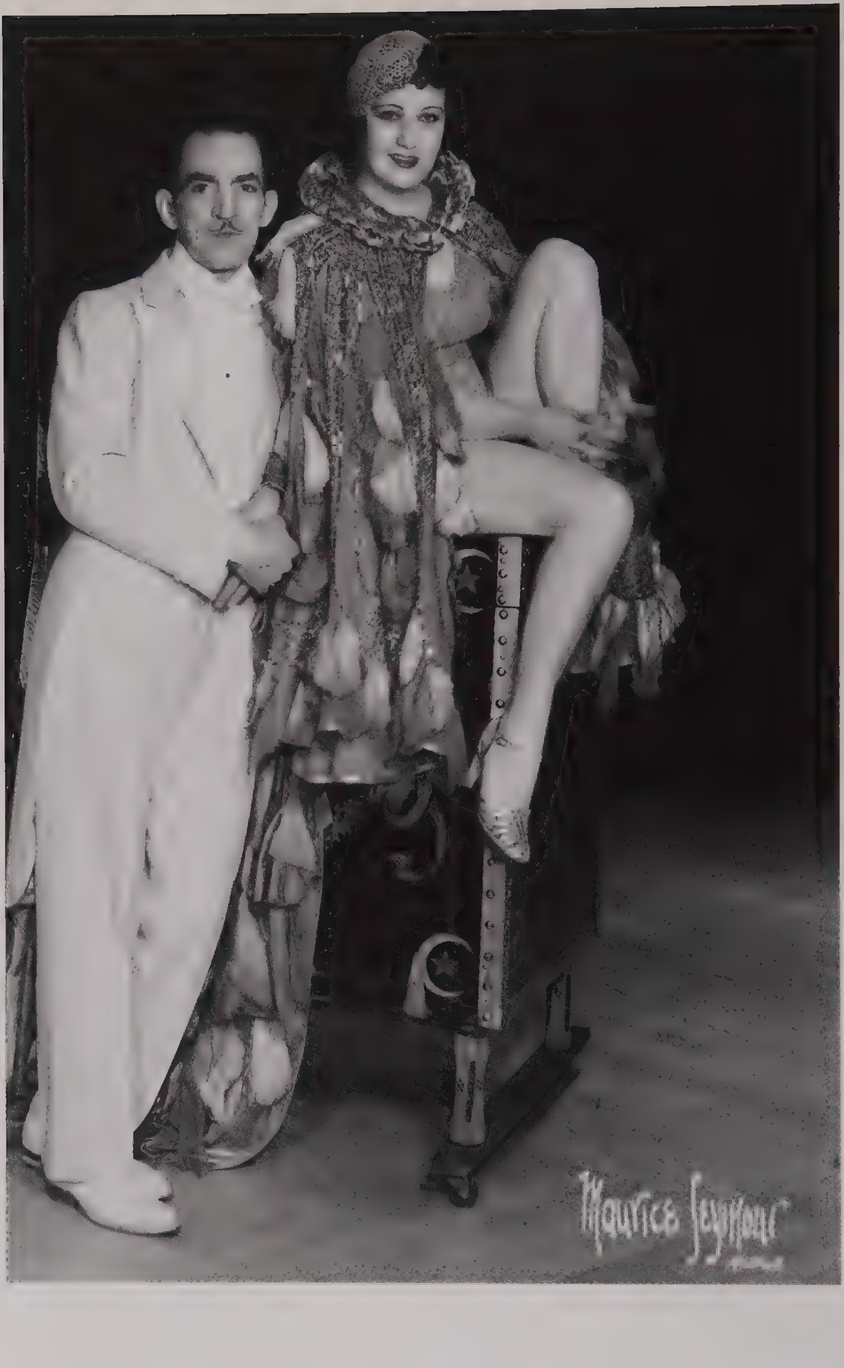
RIGHT: **ca. 1893** Harry Rouclere, of Mildred and Rouclere, began his theatrical life as a juggler and magician. His wife, Mildred May Searing, was a song-and-dance performer. After marrying in 1889, they developed a masterful mind-reading act called Psychonotism. Their first season together included a booking at Tony Pastor's New York theater, the birthplace of vaudeville.



ABOVE: 1944 Keeping up troop morale was the responsibility of Entertainments National Service Association (ENSA) in England and United Service Organizations (USO) in America. Variety shows were sent to all parts of the world, and performances were given in mess halls and officers' clubs. Here American Arnold Furst, performing in North Africa, demonstrates the hilarious Human Water Pump, where the can of water on the soldier's head is mysteriously pumped through a "hole" in his elbow.

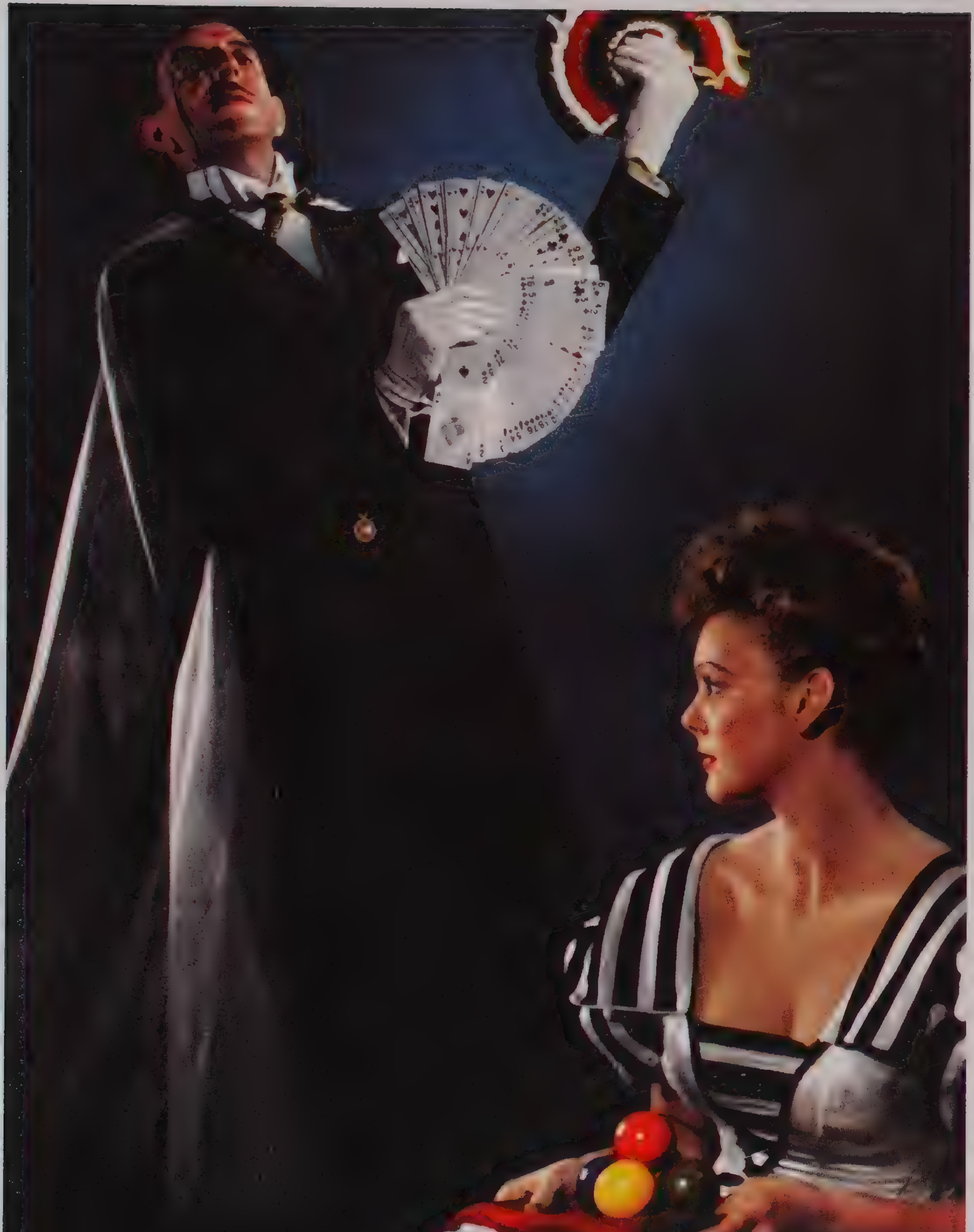
ABOVE: **1943** The *Mercury Wonder Show* was no publicity stunt. Orson Welles had a lifelong interest in magic, and in his youth he studied the shows of Houdini, Thurston, and Blackstone. No one knew better than Orson Welles how to entertain an audience, and by choosing proven tricks and illusions, he convinced those servicemen every night that he was the world's greatest magician.

RIGHT: **1944** Dell O'Dell's father was a magician, and her husband, Charles Carrer, was a skilled juggler. She had a glib tongue, and her act of snappy, rhyming patter made her a success in vaudeville, USO shows, and nightclubs. She was a television pioneer with a 1951 show called *The Dell O'Dell Show*.



ABOVE: 1937 After a long career in vaudeville, Jack Gwynne, shown here with his wife, Anne, was forced to update his act to work in nightclubs. His costume became white tails, and his props became smaller so they could easily roll on and off a dance floor.

OPPOSITE: 1945 Without question, the most influential magician of his generation was a man from Wales named Richard Pitchford, who became famous around the world as Cardini. This master pantomime artist was able to entertain 6,000 spectators with a few cigarettes and playing cards on the gigantic stage of Radio City Music Hall. A men's magazine published this photograph of Cardini with a model playing the assistant (and likely wondering what on Earth she was holding).



ABOVE: **1939** Though Dai Vernon arrived in New York City from Canada in 1915 during vaudeville's heyday, he was much too interested in the art of magic to spend his time performing tricks for laymen, though at times he had to in order to support his family. A student of the art for most of his 98 years, Vernon, known around the world as "the Professor," redefined how magicians thought about close-up magic.

RIGHT: 1930 Even the shutter of a camera has trouble catching Dai Vernon as he surreptitiously deals the second card of the deck. This series of photographs was never meant to be seen by laymen. Like so much of Vernon's work, this series was created as a teaching aid for his fellow magicians.

BELOW: 1936 During the nightclub era, Dai Vernon performed sleight-of-hand magic without the trappings of the stage, meaning right under the spectators' noses. Shown here at New York's Kit Kat Klub, Vernon shocks onlookers by causing a selected card to rise from the deck and float through the air.

ABOVE: **1936** As a young girl, Suzy Wandas was inspired by the great coin manipulator Talma of Le Roy, Talma, and Bosco. After mastering sleight of hand with cards, coins, and cigarettes, she appeared, first with her mother and later on her own, in the top theaters and nightclubs throughout Europe.

ABOVE RIGHT: **1945** Spanish magician José Frakson performed expertly with coins and cards, but it was his manipulation of lighted cigarettes that made him a vaudeville and nightclub star. His joyful personality convinced audiences that he was having more fun than anyone and helped forge a career that spanned half a century.

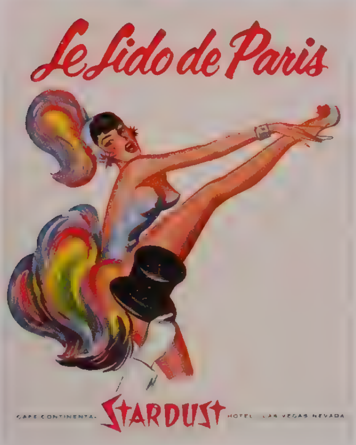
RIGHT: **1948** Nightclub audiences loved the fact that Gloria Jerome combined the skill of a great magician and the sex appeal of a beautiful assistant. Jerome's father built a magic act with little Gloria as his assistant, and by the time she was a teenager, Gloria had her own manipulation act using cards and billiard balls.

OPPOSITE: **ca. 1950s** Celeste Evans's career encompassed the nightclub and hotel floor-show era. She grabbed the audience's attention the moment she walked on stage and had little trouble proving there was nothing up her sleeve. Evans made Chicago her home base, a perfect location from which to reach all points east, west, and south.

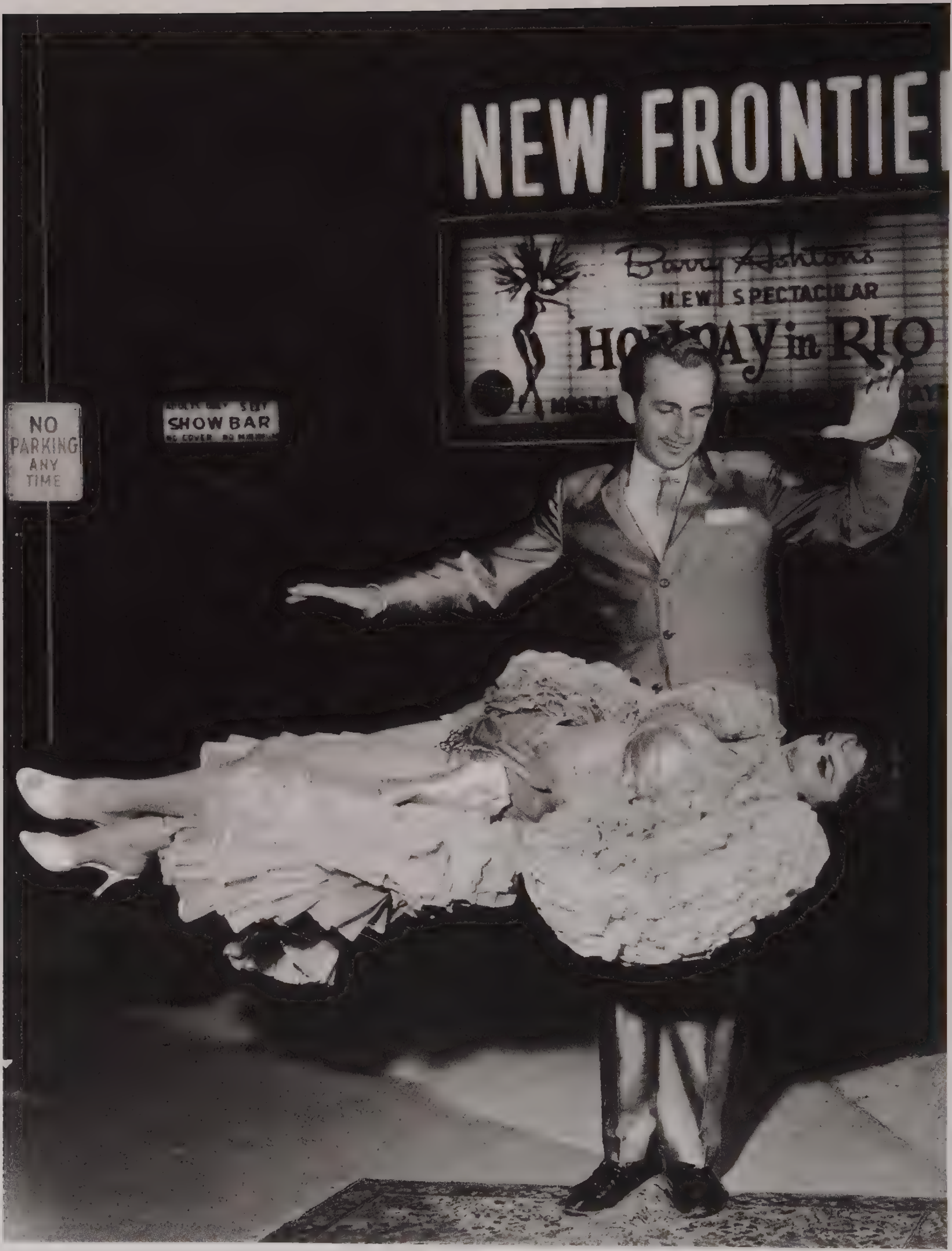
LEFT: **1954** Channing Pollock was like a comet streaking through the night sky in magic history. During a brief seven-year career, he produced seven doves during seven minutes of perfect magic. While not the first to produce a dove, he raised this facet of magic to high art and generated a tidal wave of impersonators. Not since Cardini had one performer affected the art of magic in such a dramatic fashion. His movie-star appearance was perfectly suited to the glamorous world of nightclubs, where he reigned supreme throughout the 1950s. His résumé reads like a fairy tale, with appearances in Las Vegas, at the London Palladium, and for Grace Kelly and Prince Rainier's wedding guests in Monte Carlo in 1956.

OPPOSITE TOP AND CENTER: **1957 and 1958** Marvyn Roy and Carol's *Mr. Electric* act was perfectly suited to Europe's top nightclub, the Lido de Paris, top. The seemingly endless cord of light bulbs that Carol pulled from Marvyn's mouth extended right out into the audience. When the Lido de Paris brought its renowned revue to the Stardust Hotel in budding Las Vegas in 1958, *Mr. Electric* was on the bill.

RIGHT: **ca. 1959** Performers in vaudeville worked feverishly to project their personalities across the footlights. In nightclubs, with the audience often just a few feet away, Channing Pollock developed a style that was aloof, almost arrogant, calmly extracting playing cards and birds from a handkerchief or from nothing at all. For the finale, an entire cage full of birds melted into thin air.


Le Lido de Paris
CAFE CONTINENTAL STARDUST HOTEL LAS VEGAS NEVADA

RIGHT: **1950** Like all successful magicians, Marvyn Roy took a long, arduous journey to the top. His first version of the light bulb trick involved seven bulbs that didn't reach the length of his arm. Years of work and constant performing honed the act into a finely tuned work of art that kept Marvyn and Carol employed for an astonishing 50 years.


NEW FRONTIE
Barry Ashton's
NEW SPECTACULAR
HOLIDAY in RIO
NO PARKING ANY TIME
SHOW BAR

ABOVE: **1961** Magic arrived in Las Vegas in 1947 when the town was an embryonic desert oasis. Magicians such as Ron Urban, seen here levitating a woman right out on the sidewalk, found work as opening acts for the headline stars and, by 1958, in the lavish revues that arrived.

PAGES 528–529: **1951** The career of multitalented Jay Marshall encompassed vaudeville, nightclubs, and television. Here he stands alone on stage, blinded by the spotlight, peering into a darkened theater. For an audience, the experience of watching a magician is a communal one. For the performer, alone with his skill and experience, it is a solitary task.

RIGHT: **1951** Canadian Ross Bertram performs close-up magic for the unblinking eye of a television camera. This new medium positioned every viewer in a front-row seat, making it an ideal format for this intimate style of magic. Magicians soon learned that misdirection does not work on a camera lens; this forced them to, once again, adapt their art to a new type of stage, the television screen.

BELOW: **1950** During his lifetime, Dutch magician Fred Kaps was arguably the finest all-around magician in the world. In his native Holland, he elicited big laughs from viewers with clever patter. He dazzled audiences of magicians with his exquisite manipulation act, and at the close-up table, Kaps's skill was legendary.

RIGHT: **1956** One of Fred Kaps's greatest assets was his consummate acting ability; whether he was picking giant coins out of the air or losing control of an endless stream of salt that poured from his hand, he turned spectators into believers. Kaps, shown here with Ed Sullivan, was a frequent performer on the popular U.S. variety television program *The Ed Sullivan Show*. During his 1964 appearance, he had a backstage view as the last remnants of vaudeville were buried under the tidal wave of screams and applause that greeted another act, the Beatles.

APPENDIX

CREDITS

Key: t: top; c: center; b: bottom; l: left; r: right; a: all.

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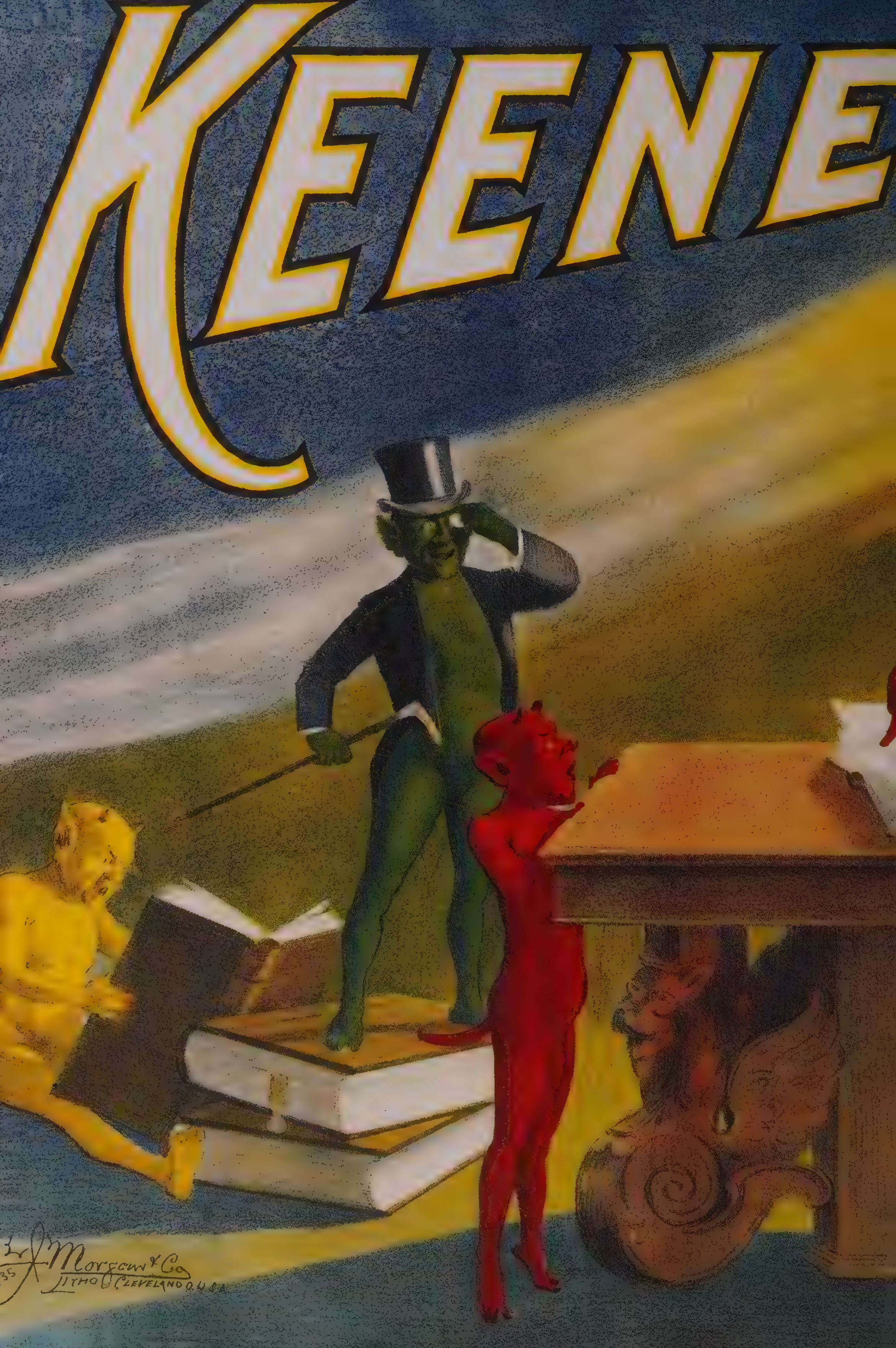
PAGE 530: **19th-century** Stock poster. *Christian Fechner Collection*

PAGES 532–533: **1927** V. A. Temnomeroff poster. *Christian Fechner Collection*

PAGES 536–537: **ca. 1900** The American magician Keene (John Culbertson). *George and Sandy Daily Collection*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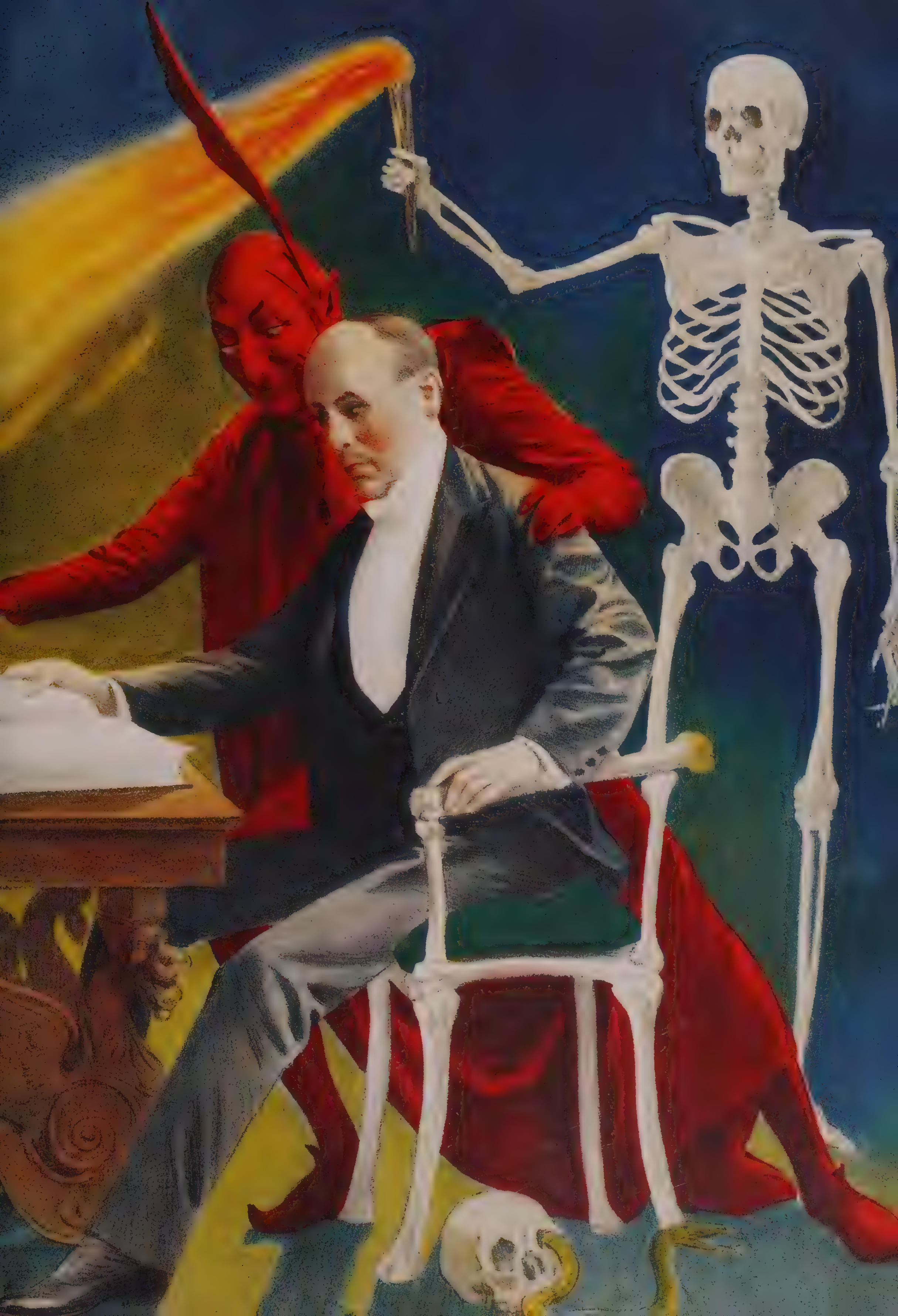

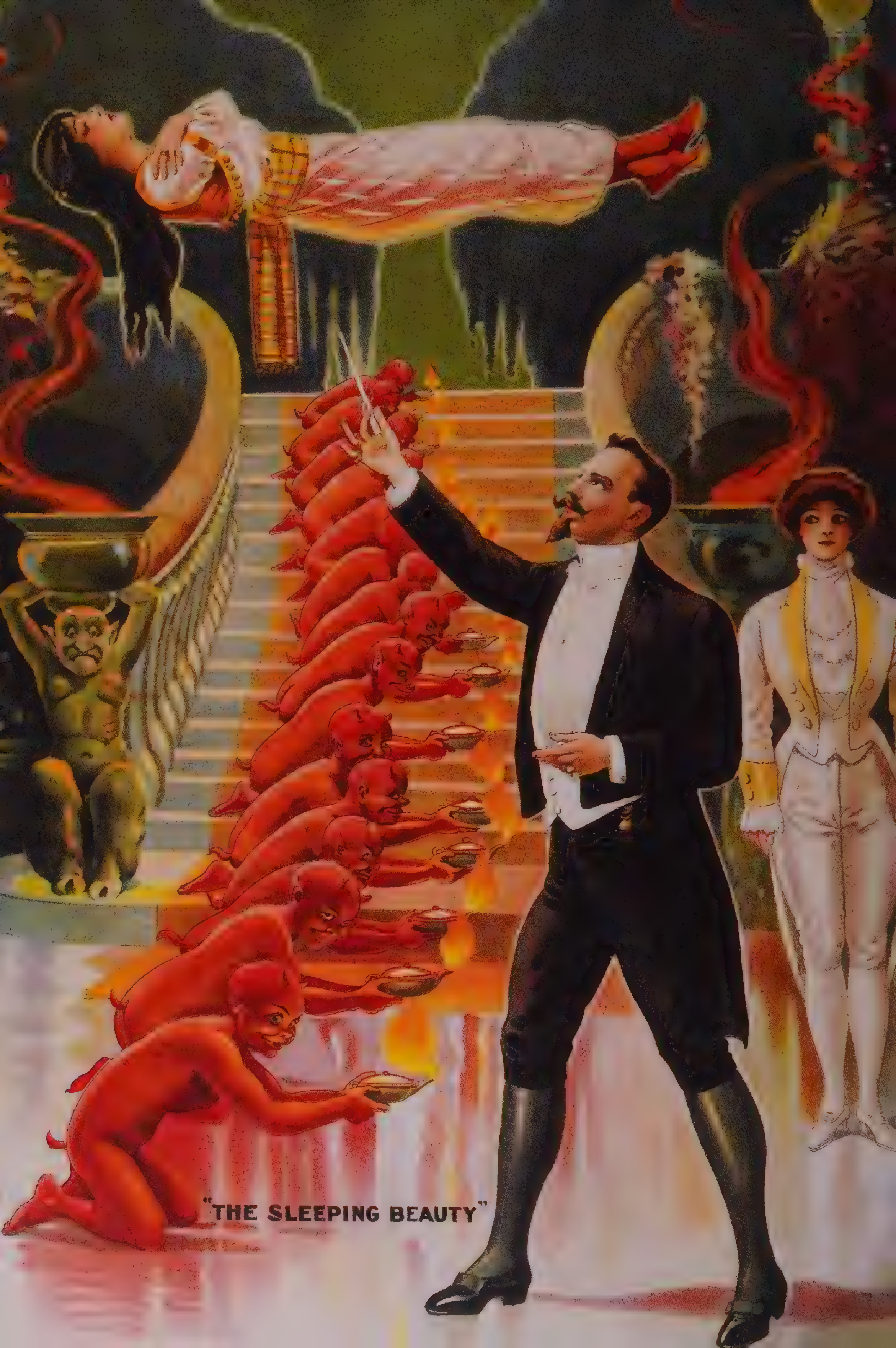
"THE SLEEPING BEAUTY"

THE AUTHORS

THE AUTHORS

Mike Caveney is a writer, collector, professional magician, and the publisher of over 50 books on the theory, practice, and history of magic. His biographical works include *Kellar's Wonders* (2003) with Bill Miesel, and *Carter the Great* (1995). An avid collector and performer for over four decades, he has appeared onstage or on TV in more than 20 countries.

Jim Steinmeyer is the author of many books on magic history and practice, including the *Los Angeles Times* best seller *Hiding the Elephant* (2004) and *The Glorious Deception* (2006). He has created deceptions featured by leading magicians such as Doug Henning, David Copperfield, and Siegfried and Roy, and critically acclaimed illusions for the Broadway hits *Mary Poppins*, *Beauty and the Beast*, and *Into the Woods*.

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Ricky Jay, who has contributed the introduction to this book, is one of the world's great sleight-of-hand artists and a distinguished actor, historian, and best-selling author. His *Learned Pigs & Fireproof Women* and *Jay's Journal of Anomalies* were both *New York Times* "Notable Books of the Year," and he defined the terms of his art for *The Cambridge Guide to American Theatre* and *Encyclopedia Britannica*.

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Noel Daniel is a graduate of Princeton University and a former Fulbright Scholar to Berlin. She earned an MA in London and was director of a photography gallery before editing books. Her TASCHEN publications include *Kay Nielsen's A Thousand and One Nights* and *East of the Sun and West of the Moon*, *The Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm*, *The Fairy Tales of Hans Christian Andersen*, *Wintertime Tales*, *The Magic Book*, and *The Circus*.

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A special thanks to the designer Andy Disl, my collaborator in life and work. Many thanks also to Benedikt Taschen, who understands very well the effort it takes to pull a rabbit out of a hat.

To the many collectors who opened their homes and collections to me, thank you for your generous hospitality, enthusiasm, and support. This book could never have transpired without your blessing. And to those collectors and archivists who provided additional fact-checking information for the images, dates, and names, thank you for these important contributions.

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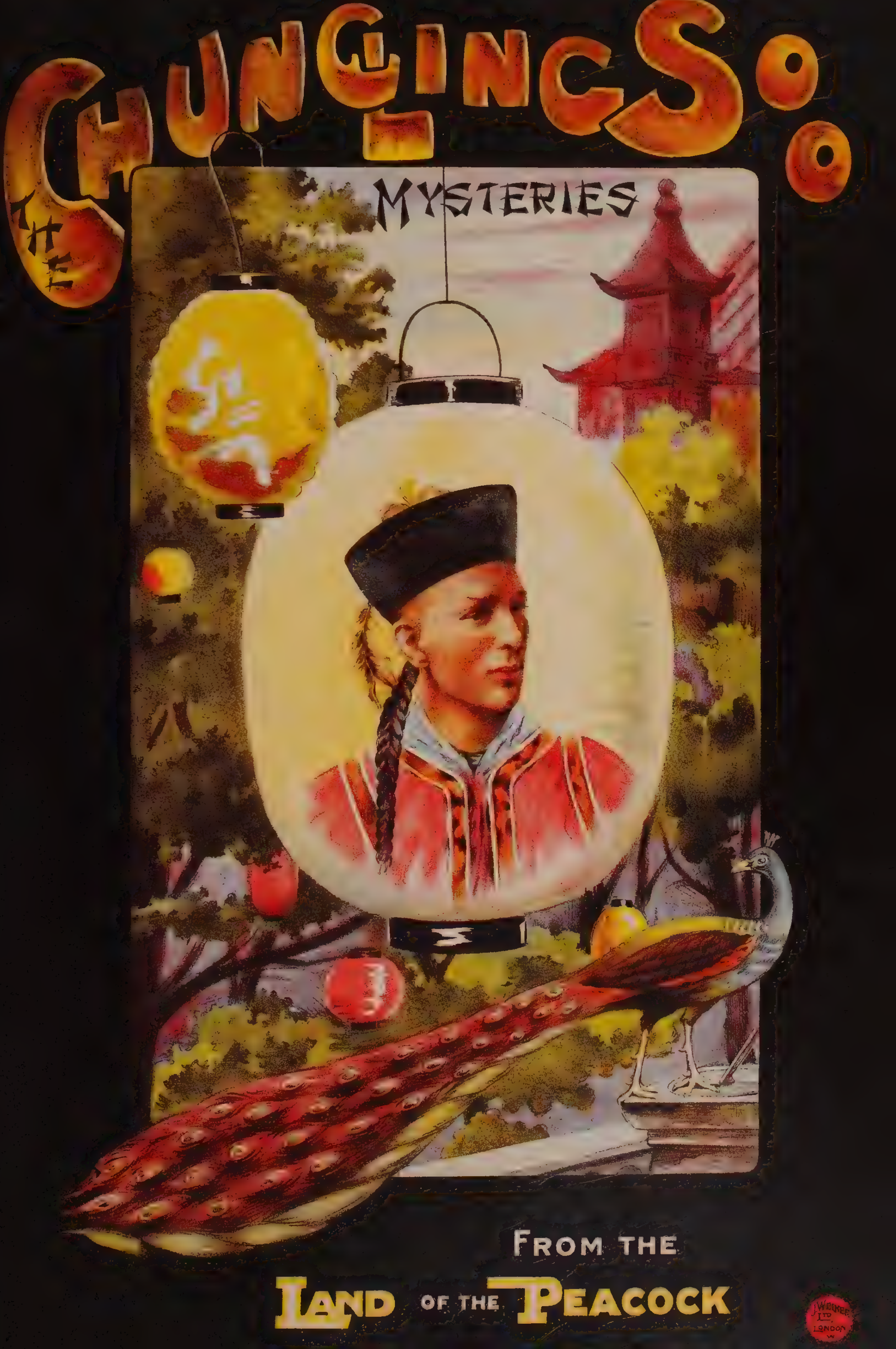
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PAGE 538: **early 20th-century** Stock poster.
Ken Trombly Collection

PAGE 541: **ca. 1916** Some illusions were presented to the public even before audience members entered the theater. Legendary vaudevillian Chung Ling Soo, "the Marvelous Chinese Conjurer," was in fact an elaborate stage identity, supported by exotic posters. He was William Ellsworth Robinson, a talented performer and skilled inventor from New York's Lower East Side who never once visited China.

PAGE 543: **late 18th century** A performer named Pierson demonstrates mesmerism, an early form of hypnotism, by striking a dramatic pose. This illustration is accompanied by a Latin caption that captures the dramatic tension: "Thus I wish, thus I command, my will is reason enough." These mysterious skills were appropriated by magicians in the form of mind reading and séance phenomena.

PAGE 544: **ca. 1910** Anonymous magicians.
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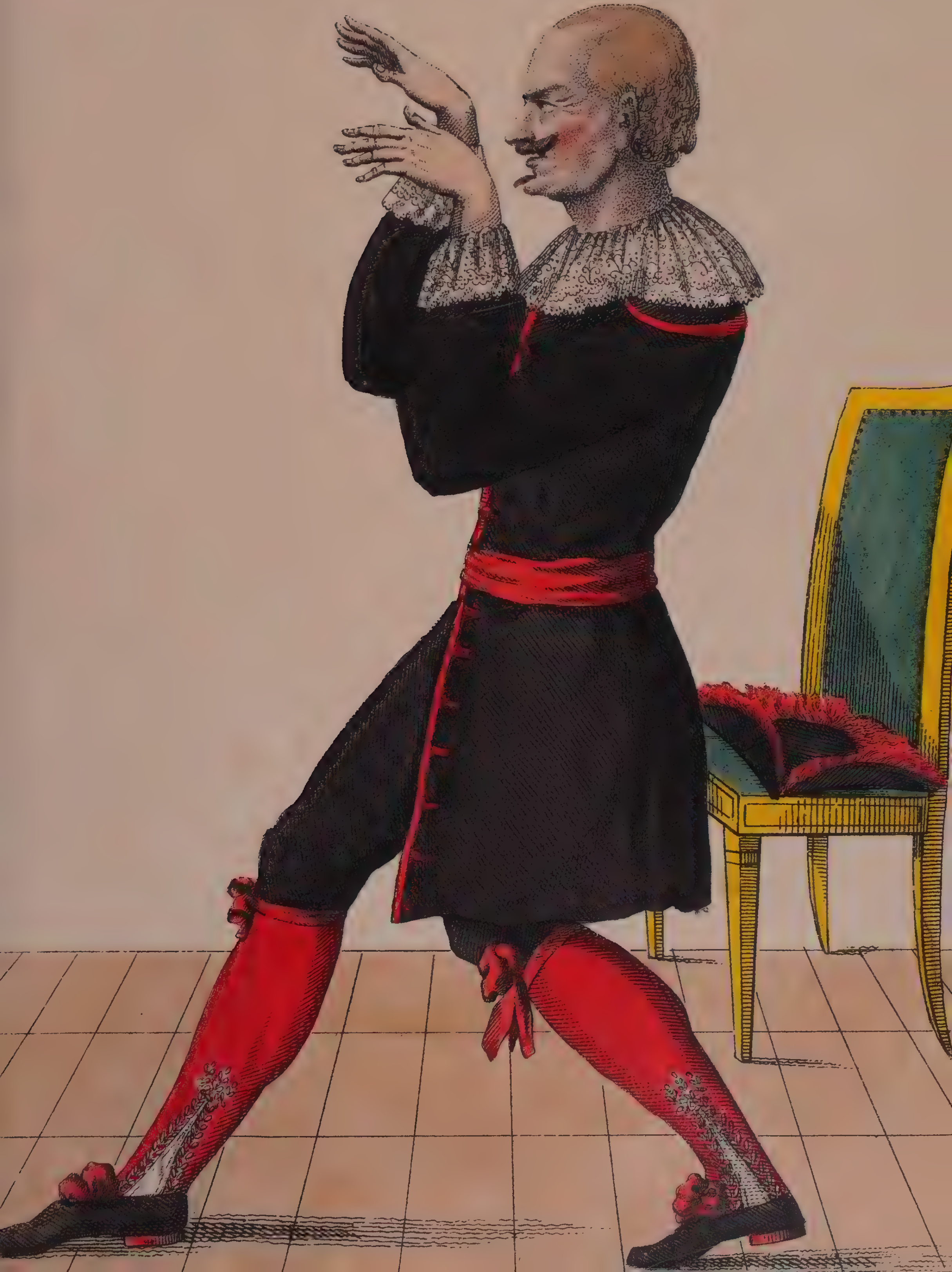
To *Please and Cheat the Sight* © 2009 by Ricky Jay



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